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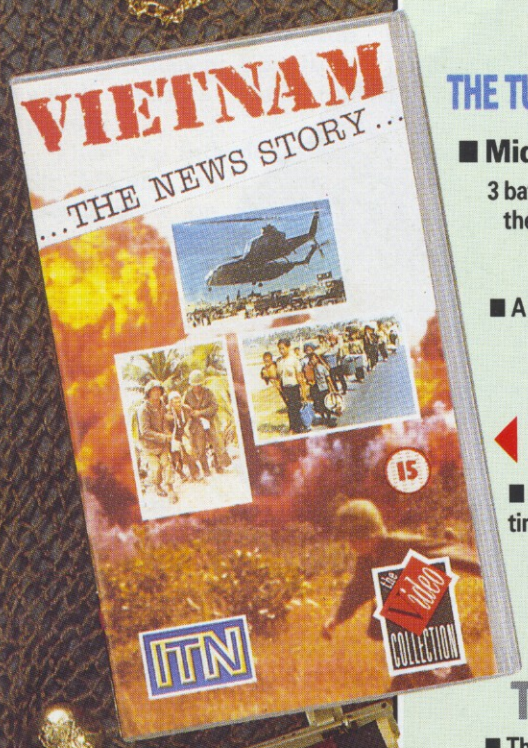

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PAST & PRESENT

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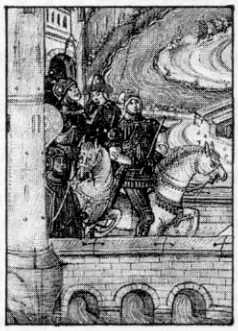

Our cover illustration shows part of an illuminated initial from the *Corvinus Gradual* manuscript of 1487, showing 15th C. Hungarian armour and costume — see P.29.

Published monthly by
WINDROW & GREENE LTD.
5 GERRARD STREET
LONDON W1V 7LJ, ENGLAND
(*tel*: 071-287-4570)

Advertising:
Valerie Scott
23 Stafford Road, Petersfield,
Hants. GU32 2JF (*tel*: 0730-63976)

Typesetting:
York House Typographic
York Avenue, Hanwell,
London W7 3HY

Printed by:
Surrey Fine Art Press Ltd.
Cavendish Rd., Redhill, Surrey RH1 4AH

Editor:
MARTIN WINDROW

Editorial design by
Victor Shreeve

UK newsagent distribution:
AGB Impress
22 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU
(*te*: 071-253 3456)

USA hobby trade:
Bill Dean Books Ltd.,
131-35 31st Avenue,
Linden Hill, NY 11354

Canada:
Vanwell Publishing Ltd.,
1 Northrup Cres., PO Box 2131, Stn. B,
St. Catharines, Ontario L2M 6P5

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Denmark:
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Plus Interpress
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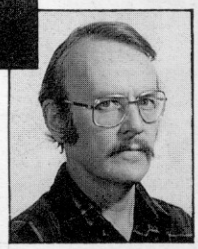
Subscriptions service
Military Illustrated,
c/o Select Subscriptions
5 Riverpark Estate,
Billet Lane, Berkhamsted,
Herts, HP4 1HL, England

Publisher's subscription rates for 12 issues (one year): UK, £30; other European, £50; by Airspeed — USA, $75; other non-European, £60: all payments in sterling or US dollars.

'Military Illustrated Past & Present is published monthly by Windrow & Greene Ltd. The subscription price is $75 for one year. Second Class Postage Pending at Rahway. NJ. Postmaster send address corrections to Military Illustrated c/o Mercury Airfreight International Ltd. Inc. 233 Randolph Avenue, Avenel, New Jersey 07001, USA.

EDITORIAL

Andrew Callan



David Nicolle

At long last, after a delay which is entirely our own fault, we welcome to the pages of '*MI*' our old friend **Dr. David Nicolle**. David was born in London during a V1 raid in 1944; and has been involved with arms and armour since the age of six when his father, the well-known historical illustrator Patrick Nicolle, bought the first of a growing collection of swords which the boy had to polish to earn his pocket-money. David went on to study Islamic arms and armour during his ten years at London and Edinburgh Universities. He has also worked for the BBC, written and illustrated for various children's magazines, published articles on Middle Eastern history, authored many titles in the Osprey *Men-at-Arms* series, and taught art and architectural history at Yarmouk University, Jordan, 1983-87. Since returning from the Middle East he has turned to full-time writing, mostly on military and Islamic history, with the occasional lecture on arms and armour. He is married to an American, has two children, and lives in a Leicestershire village.

To trace the owner, and fate, of a collected World War I other rank's tunic is a considerable achievement, and we are indebted for the story and the excellent photographs to **Dr. John Hall**. Born in 1960, John did his BA at Sussex and recently received his D.Phil. from Oxford. An avid researcher of military history, John is an Assistant Professor of Colonial and Revolutionary American History at Albion College in Michigan. His article was a joint effort with his wife **Annette Steigerwald**; she did her undergraduate work at Bamberg University in Germany, has an MA in German literature from the University of South Carolina, and recently received her M.Litt. in comparative linguistics from Oxford. Dr. Hall is a keen and extraordinarily lucky collector whose name has figured before in our columns, though not until now his byline.

Andrew Callan, born in 1954, works as a personnel administrator at the University of Manchester; and spends his spare time researching the byways of military history, using the excellent resources of the local John Rylands University Library. He has previously written extensively in the wargames press; and we hope that his fascinating article on the Dahomean army — surely one of the most unusual foes ever faced by the 19th century Colonial armies — is not his last contribution to our pages. The University of Manchester has been the cradle of a number of impressive military history writers who have appeared in '*MI*' — among them Paul Holder and Nick Sekunda — and, of course, of the renowned author John Ellis. It must be something they put in the beer up there.

Victorian Military Society

At the recent annual general meeting of the VMS Col. Peter Walton was elected Chairman of the Society in succession to Dr. Douglas Johnson. Peter Walton is an author, artist and recognised authority on the British Army of the Victorian era, well known for two publications on *Simkins' Soldiers, the British Army in 1890.*

'Sharkhunters'

We have received notice that this group will host in February 1991 an international naval history tour overseas, to include a short patrol on a deisel sub with periscope — depth dive; a low-level ASW patrol flight; and various social and educational functions. This will not be inexpensive, we believe, but may prove a unique opportunity. For further information contact: Sharkhunters, PO Box 1539, Hernando, Florida 32642, USA, or call 904-637-2917. We have no further knowledge of this excerise; but a reader who participated in a previous trip reports good value.

John Hall & Annette Steigerwald

MFC of America

The Miniature Figure Collectors of America announce their 50th anniversary exhibition and mart at Valley Forge Convention Center, Valley Forge, Pa. on 17/18 May 1991. A full programme of exhibits, seminars, and social events will be supported by a wide range of sales stands. Details from: MFCA-50, 315 S. 6th St., Philadelphia, PA 19106, USA.

Cover price

One or two readers of our 1940 Special issue, '*MI*' No. 28, became alarmed that the magazine's monthly price might have gone up. Sorry — we should have explained: the special price of £3.50 was to cover greatly increased size and colour content of No. 28, and (for the time being at least) the standard price of £2.50 still holds. Subscribers got the enlarged issue at no extra price. . . Don't *you* wish you were a subscriber? Well, turn to page 7 and busy yourself accordingly.

THE AUCTION SCENE

August is usually a fairly quiet month in the main rooms since many potential buyers are likely to be on holiday, but this is not to say there are no sales. Bonhams held their sale of Militaria at their Chelsea rooms and offered a wide range of material. The catalogue sometimes tended to include fairly basic entries such as 'a Georgian officer's gorget'; since there were several patterns worn during the reigns of the Georges this does mean that, unless they are attending the sale, potential buyers really need to go to the viewing or call for condition reports before bidding. The majority of lots sold at prices below £200, many for less than £100. If this trend continues it should mean that the smaller collector has yet another potential source of supply. Phillips, Wallis & Wallis and Kent Sales are all well established in this market, but the collector will be only too happy to have another set of rooms offering lower priced items.

The medal section included a variety of lots ranging from the Military General Service to Second World War groups. The lack of interest in un-named, anonymous medals was fairly clearly shown by the price of £15 paid for a set of four World War II including and 8th Army Africa Star. Unless there is a decoration or other named piece such groups are impossible to ascribe to any individual or unit, and this automatically reduces their value. There was a similar lack of interest in Eastern European badges: of four lots only one, of Soviet naval badges — 35 in all — sold, for £50. This might well be a future field in which small boys could start their collecting career; certainly the prices should be within the range of their pocket money, and since the walls collapsed the supply seems to be increasing.

There must have been one or two very pleasantly surprised vendors after the sale, nevertheless. A ceremonial staff of the Lieutenant of the Guard of the Yeomen of the Guard, estimated at £180 — £220, sold for £1,300. A close helmet described as German, late 16th century, was estimted at £800 — £1,200, but soon reached £2,600 — yet another proof of the demand for armour in the rooms.

Sotheby's at Billingshurst held a sale of guns at the end of July which included a range of early, interesting revolvers, many of which were for rimfire cartridges. Such weapons are available to collectors without a firearm certificate, and consequently sold well. Top price in the handgun section was for a fine .44 Smith & Wesson Model 3 Russian First Model nickel-plated revolver which reached £2,750. A Webley–Fosbery .45 self-cocking revolver with 6in. barrel maintained the high prices that these interesting weapons have been fetching lately, selling for £1,760. A 'broomhandle' Mauser 7.63mm pistol and stock made £1,540; and another went for £1,430 and a 9mm version for £880. Such prices indicate an obvious demand for good quality weapons; but such items are in a field over which a serious — possibly terminal — threat hangs.

The European Parliament has recently drafted what may well become a firearms law common to all EEC countries. If the law is not greatly modified before it receives its final approval the shooters and the entire gun trade are going to find life very difficult indeed. From the shooter's point of view the law will be disastrous, for one section seeks to ban all semi-automatic weapons from civilian hands. This means that all weapons from most .22 target pistols to Colt .45 automatics will be taken away from shooters. The Olympic Games shooting section would have to be modified. Similarly, all 'military' weapons would be banned and the term 'military' has not yet been defined! If ammunition is selected as the criterion then it is open to conjecture what will be left. The commercial transport of weapons within the Community will be subject to severe control, and there are other equally horrendous sections.

The law will be in the form of a Directive, which means that it is binding on all countries within the EEC. It will also be the minimum requirement and each country may, if it wishes, build on this base line. Antique firearms do not escape, and all the gains made in broadening the definition of the antique in the United Kingdom could well be lost since the cut-off date for antiques will be 1870. The sum effect of such severe restrictions will be enormous and will affect collectors, auctioneers, shooters and indeed the entire gun trade to a very serious degree. In some cases the law will almost certainly lead to the closing down of many dealers.

It is to be hoped that the efforts at present being made by various shooting groups will have some success in modifying these restrictions, which are draconian, pointless and, it must be said, almost impossible to enforce. Unless the European Parliament is planning wholesale confiscation with no recompense the cost of even a small compensation payment to shooters will reach astronomical figures. It must be said that well-informed circles are not optimistic, and the prime movers, said to be the German Socialists and 'Greens', seem to have won the day. Even the 1988 Firearm Amendment Act seems generous in comparison.

Frederick Wilkinson

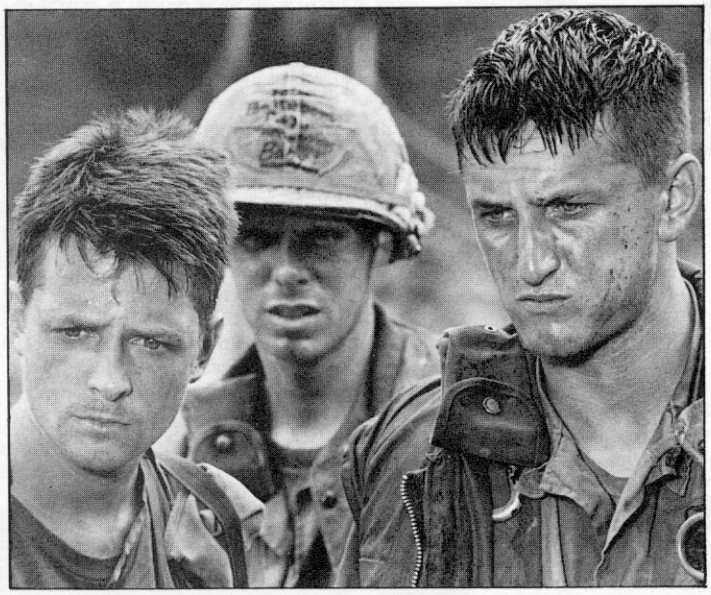
ON THE SCREEN

Video Releases to Rent:
'Old Gringo'
(RCA/Columbia: 15)
'Casualties of War'
(RCA/Columbia: 18)
'84 Charlie Mopic' (Virgin: 18)
'The Expendables'
(Cineplex: 18)
'Champagne Charlie'
(Cineplex: PG)
'Henry V' (CIC: 15)
'Glory' (RCA/Columbia: 15)

The American journalist, writer and humourist Ambrose Bierce is most remembered for his cynical *Devil's Dictionary* and collections of short stories. *In the Midst of Life: Tales of Soldiers and Civilians* drew on his experiences as a young man in the Union Army during the American Civil War, some of which, notably *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge* (1961), have been adapted into classic short films. Bierce mysteriously disappeared in revolutionary Mexico in 1913: Luis Puenzo's *Old Gringo* (1989), based on the novel *Gringo Viejo* by Carlos Fuentes, creates a drama around how he may have met his end.

Jane Fonda plays Harriet Winslow, a spinster schoolteacher who leaves the safety of Washington to discover a new life as governess for a wealthy Mexican landowner's children. She finds herself attracting the attentions of two strong, but contrasting, personalities: one is the 71-year-old Bierce (Gregory Peck), the 'Old Gringo' of the title, the other the handsome but ruthless Mexican General Arroyo (Jimmy Smits). Harriet has to choose between two kinds of culture and two kinds of love. Particular attention was paid to making the look of the film authentic. Puenzo talked to historians and old revolutionaries, spent time at the Museum of Villa, and screened films at the Mexican Cinemateque. Much research was carried out at the famous Casasolas archive in Pachuca, where photographs were studied with particular reference to clothes, weapons, trains and architecture. Some scenes were filmed in the beautiful and historic town of Zacatecas, the site of one of the bloodiest battles of the revolution where thousands of revolutionaries, *federales*, and about half the town's civilian population were killed. The briefly-seen Pancho Villa is played by Pedro Armendariz Jr., re-creating a role played before both by himself and his father Pedro Armendariz. This spectacular production boasts hundreds of extras, a vast hacienda set, and an action scene realised on a scale that is all too rare in contemporary cinema.

At the beginning of Brian DePalma's *Casualties of War* (1989) the sight on the subway of a Vietnamese girl triggers bad memories for Eriksson (Michael J. Fox). He recalls how his tough and experienced squad sergeant Meserve (Sean Penn), frustrated by casualties and a belief that all Vietnamese are Viet-Cong sympathisers, hatches an appalling plan to kidnap and gang-rape a village girl while on long-range patrol. By failing to take the one opportunity to release the girl, Eriksson leaves himself helpless to prevent her eventual murder. He decides to inform his superiors, only to encounter indifference, threats, and an attempt on his own life. The story is based on a true incident described in Daniel Lang's book of the same title, originally published in *The New Yorker* in 1969. The script is by David Rabe, a Vietnam veteran and an award-winning playwright whose acclaimed play *Streamers* was also about Vietnam. Brian DePalma displays his customary directorial skills in both the gripping action sequences and the tense personal drama. The clash of personalities is well conveyed by Penn and Fox, and provides the latter with opportunity to prove himself in a role more demanding than lightweight comedy.



Michael J. Fox and Sean Penn in 'Casualties of War'.
(RCA/Columbia)

The portrayal of ground combat in Vietnam reached a new level of realism in Patrick Duncan's film *84 Charlie Mopic* (1989). The film follows a six-man patrol from the 173rd Airborne Brigade, assigned to locate enemy build-ups in the Central Highlands. What distinguishes this film from its predecessors is that the action is seen entirely from the point-of-view of a camera wielded by an Army cinematographer who accompanies the patrol while making a training documentary. The cameraman, identified as '84 Charlie Mopic', begins his film by having the members of the patrol introduce themselves. The inexperienced lieutenant, (Jonathan Emerson), begins a speech but dries up. The seasoned black Sergeant O'Donovan (Richard Brooks) resents taking a cameraman on patrol. There is evidently enmity between 'L. T.' and O'Donovan, as the former vainly attempts to assert his authority.

In order to remain consistent with the camera's point-of-view the film eschews overhead shots and long-shots. Also absent is the use of pop-music on the soundtrack, with the exception of a Donovan record heard on the squad's radio. The radio is also the medium by which we hear the chilling sounds of a friendly patrol being overrun by the enemy, while the squad listens impotently. The details are convincing: Pretty Boy (Jason Tomlins) diligently applies foot-powder, alarms are made by suspending tin-cans from wire, and dog-tags are taped into a dead GI's mouth before he is sealed in a body-bag. The film successfully conveys a feeling of claustrophobia as the patrol progresses along jungle paths: the ambushes and ensuing panic have a vivid documentary realism that merit a high reccommendation.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for Cirio H. Santiago's *The Expendables* (1988). The film exhibits all the worst traits of low-budget exploitation films: the acting and script are crude, and extras playing the NVA fall like ninepins. The climax is staged in an abandoned fort that looks suspiciously like the one featured in the same director's equally abysmal *Eye of the Eagle* (1987). The production appears to have been made in the Philippines, but the distributors are unable to supply further information.

American Civil War buffs may find some interest in Alan Eastman's made-for-television *Champagne Charlie* (1988). Hugh Grant plays Charles Heidseieck, born into the renowned champagne-making family in France. While contesting ownership of the vineyards with his uncle Charles travels to America, ostensibly to expand into an untapped market, but also to provide diplomatic information for the French government, which is considering a campaign in Mexico. His interest in Pauline (Megan Gallager), a Southern belle he met in Paris while she was arms-buying for the Confederacy, leads to a trip to Louisiana, and a confrontation with General Benjamin Butler. This French-Canadian co-production might have benefitted from a higher budget, but, as historical costume dramas go, is mildly entertaining.

Lastly, Kenneth Brannagh's *Henry V* (1989), reviewed in '*MI*' No. 23, and Edwark Zwick's *Glory* (1990), reviewed in '*MI*' No. 26, have both been released onto rental video.

Stephen J. Greenhill

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REVIEWS

'The Eighteen Manoeuvres for His Majesty's Infantry, by Serjeant Thomas Langley, 1st Royal Regt., 1794'; published by Bill Leeson, 5 St. Agnell's Lane Cotts., Hemel Hempstead, Hertforshire HP2 7HJ; p/bk., £3.50 inc. postage

Sir David Dundas, alias 'Old Pivot', produced the first universal drill-manual for the British Army, published privately as *Principles of Military Movements* in 1788 and reissued with official sanction in 1792 as *Rules & Regulations for the Movements of His Majesty's Infantry*. The work was criticised for being insufficiently forward-looking and for paying little attention to light infantry tactics; but nevertheless it was of immense value in codifying infantry manoeuvres for the first time. It revolved around the 'Eighteen Manoeuvres' which encompassed the basic formations used in the field; yet in the original tome of 377 pages these were listed only briefly, and references to the appropriate manoeuvres were scattered throughout the book. A 'shorthand' version was clearly required for use in the field, and a number were abridged from Dundas, of which Sgt. Langley's manual (price four shillings) was an example.

It is difficult to appreciate higher tactics without understanding exactly how a battalion manoeuvred, so that Langley's booklet is as valuable to historians today as to officers and NCOs at the time. No military enthusiast should overlook Bill Leeson's reprints, which are consistently interesting and well-produced; in this case the work is even more comprehensible that it was in 1794 due to a re-arrangement of the 18 plates and editorial notes with expansions from Dundas, and at £3.50 it represents remarkably good value. One point should be made: Langley's drill is intended for a battalion of eight companies, whereas Dundas's was for the usual ten-company battalion. It should also be noted that the title is slightly misleading in that Langley had no connection with the '1st Royal Regt' of Foot (Royal Scots), but actually belonged to the 1st Royal Regt. of Tower Hamlets Militia.

Bunbury tells of a conversation between Moore and Dundas relating to the drill-book, in which Moore commented that the 'damned eighteen manoeuvres' limited the value of the work. 'Why-ay', said Dundas, 'ay, people don't understand what was meant. Blockheads don't understand.' By reference to this reprint, *everyone* will understand a great deal more about the mechanics of Wellington's army. **PJH**

'Men of the Red Beret: Airborne Forces 1940-1990' by Max Arthur; Hutchinson; 430 pp.; 22 maps, 43 b/w illust.; index; £16.95

Men of the Red Beret tells the history of British Airborne Forces from their inception in the Second World War to operations in Northern Ireland and the Falklands. Max Arthur has developed an excellent interview technique in which soldiers of all ranks tell their story as they experienced it. After he has interviewed the soldier Max Arthur sends a transcript of the tape for correction or alteration; and it says a great deal for the men interviewed in *Men of the Red Beret* and Arthur's earlier books *Above All Courage* (the Falklands) and *Soldiers Talking* (Northern Ireland), that they have stuck to their comments, however frank or controversial.

The largest section of *Men of the Red Beret* is about the Second World War and covers the tough fighting from North Africa to Arnhem and the Rhine Crossing. The 'small wars' that have followed around the world since 1945 may only be covered by one or two interviews, but a short introduction and map sets them in context, and the reader can see where and why men fought in the jungle of Sabah or the desert of Aden.

Readers familiar with the Falklands and Northern Ireland titles may recognise some of the interviews — they do, however, offer frank insights into the fears and hopes of soldiers in action, and make a valuable comparison with the words of the men who fought in Normandy and at Arnhem.

If the reviewer has one criticism it is that the photograph of Lt. Rendel of 2 Para, who escaped in Italy in the Second World War and managed to have his photograph taken hitting the bulls' eye of an amusement arcade while flanked by two men of the Luftwaffe, has no explanation in the text. The reader would like to know more about Mario Verni, aka Lt. Rendel . . .

Your reviewer was privileged to attend the launch of *Men of the Red Beret*, and though the Second World War veterans who attended may be 65 or older, the book gives them back their vitality. Max Arthur has a gift of asking the right questions in the right way and the replies and recollections are vivid and at times very moving. Interestingly, he has managed to bring together several participants in an event so that their accounts cross-reference and build up a bigger picture.

Many regimental histories have been written, some about regiments with centuries of history. If the student or the non-technical reader wants to read one which is well constructed and researched and which is also a vigorous and lively story, *Men of the Red Beret* could not be bettered. **EWWF**

CARDS AND PRINTS

'The Royal Sussex Regiment', a set of 12 postcards published by the Sussex Combined Services Museum, Redoubt Fortress, Royal Parade, Eastbourne; £1.35 inc postage

I regret this very ordinary set of cards does little to enhance the glorious history of this famous regiment. The cards have been taken from one combined montage illustration by Richard Simkin depicting the uniforms of the regiment during the many years of its history. Seemingly poor photography, and indeed a rather poor original illustration by Simkin, have combined to produce a set well below the standard expected today of cards of archival material. Some of Richard Simkin's work was poorly executed and I feel the publishers have picked on one of his bad examples. This is unfortunate as the subject is worthy of better things. **SC**

'The Uniforms of the Royal Sussex Regiment, 35th and 107th, 1701-1966'; small booklet, published by the Sussex Combined Services Museum; £1.35 inc postage

This small booklet contains reprints of a collection of watercolours depiciting the uniforms of the regiment during the period covered by the title. As with the set of postcards from the same publishers, the illustrations are, in the main, taken from originals by Simkin; there are others, by Charles Stadden and by a Regimental Officer. Once again the printing lacks sharpness and the colour rendering is poor. For collectors all material is important; with modern reproduction technology and a rich source of supply I think the selection could have been better. **SC**

'The Brigade of Gurkhas'; set of seven postcards; Geoff White Ltd., 'Little Acre', 19 Rushmoor Lane, Backwell, Bristol BS19 3JA; £2.45

This set, illustrated by Douglas Anderson, follow the format of earlier sets from Geoff White with two figures per card surmounted by the regimental badge of the unit. Anderson's clear, clean work is ideal for postcards of this nature. The Gurkhas are shown in various orders of dress. The regiments shown are the 2nd, King Edward VII's Own; 6th, Queen Elizabeth's Own; 7th, Duke of Edinburgh's Own; and 10th, Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles, together with the Queen's Gurkha Engineeers, the Queen's Gurkha Signals and the Gurkha Transport Regiment. I am pleased the services have been included in this set as they are sometimes neglected in pictorial material. The Gurkha engineer in diving gear looks particularly fearsome: imagine having to tackle one of these little terrors underwater — they scare most people to death on land. A very collectable set, not to be missed by postcard buffs. There are four other sets in the series already available. **SC**

We have also received:

'A Guide to the Battlefields of Europe from The Siege of Troy To The Second World War' Ed. by D. Chandler (Patrick Stephens, £16.95)

'Britain's Military Airfield 1939-45' by D.J. Smith (Patrick Stephens, £14.95)

'Action Stations 7: Military Airfields of Scotland, the North-East & Northern Ireland' by D.J. Smith (Patrick Stephens, £13.95)

'Breakdown: A History of Recovery Vehicles in the British Army' by B.S. Baxter (HMSO Books, £9.95)

'Historic Military Vehicles Directory' by B. Vanderveen (After the Battle Publications, £19.95)

'A Generation Missing' by C. Carstairs (Strong Oak Press, £12.95)

'Nothing of Importance, A Record of Eight Months At the Front With A Welsh Battalion' by B. Adams (Strong Oak Press, £11.95)

'From Vimy Ridge to the Rhine, The Great War Letters of Christopher Stone DSO MC' Ed. by G.D. Sheffield & G.I.S. Inglis (Crowood Press, £12.95)

'The Wipers Times' by P. Beaver (Papermac, pb. £8.95, hb. £14.95)

'The Experience of World War I' by J.M. Winter (Macmillan, £17.95)

'Images of War; British Posters 1939-45' (HMSO, £7.95)

'A Dictionary of the Second World War' by E. Wheal, S. Pope & J. Taylor (Grafton Books, £25.00)

'The Great Crusade' by H.P. Willmot (Michael Joseph, £17.95)

'Delivered From Evil; The Saga of World War 2' by R. Leckie (Harper & Row, £29.95)

'Our Lives in a World on the Edge' by W. Klingman (Harper & Row, £16.95)

'Struggle For Survival, The History of The Second World War' by R.A.C. Parker (Oxford University Press, £14.95)

'Business In Great Waters; The U-Boat Wars 1916-1945' by John Terraine (Octopus, £19.50)

'Jackboot, The Story of The German Soldier' by J. Laffin (David & Charles, £4.95)

'Camera In My Kitbag 1934-1945' by T. McNally (Mills Litho (PTY) Ltd, n.p.m.)

'Long Range Desert Group' by W.B. Kennedy Shaw (Greenhill Books, £13.95)

'This West African Prussia': The Dahomean Army, 1840s-90s

ANDREW CALLAN
Paintings by ANGUS McBRIDE

The Fon kingdom of Dahomey possessed one of the most remarkable military organisations in all pre-colonial Africa. For this black African state to have maintained a standing army of some 12,000 warriors, all equipped with firearms, was noteworthy enough; but the Dahomean army had two particularly distinctive features — its organisation into units with a clear pattern of regimental uniforms; and its use of female warriors as the élite shock-troops of the army.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The kingdom had its origins in the 17th century when the Fon, a tribe inhabiting the plateau of Abomey inland from the Bight of Benin, united in self-defence against the depredations of slave raiders from the Yoruba lands to the east and the minor coastal kingdoms to the south. Their own safety once secured, they were quick to see the profit in the slave trade; and by the mid-18th century had opened a way to the coast and united most of the Ewe-speaking peoples as the Kingdom of Dahomey. Nominally tributary to the powerful Oyo empire, the kingdom won its independence in the 1820s, and thereafter maintained an aggressive military posture until conquered by the French 70 years later.

The economy was centralised in the hands of the king, and was able to diversify into the even more profitable market for palm oil after the Europeans turned against slavery. But though the export trade in slaves dried up, the culture and rituals of the kingdom continued to demand a regular supply of captives — for pressed labour in the plantations, for recruitment into the army, and, most abhorrent to European eyes, for the practice of human sacrifice, which the Fon believed was essential for the continued well-being of the kingdom.

Lurid accounts of the annual royal 'Customs', at which scores of captives were slaughtered, filled the pages (and boosted the sales) of the many accounts written by European visitors to the Dahomean court. The 'Customs' were undoubtedly a bloody and unpleasant business; but their extent was relatively restrained under the later kings (at least in comparison with the practice in the neighbouring Ashanti and Yoruba lands, which, on the whole, got a rather better press); and they did serve a definite religious purpose, which the more sensitive observers came to understand.

According to Sir Richard Burton: 'Human sacrifice in Dahomey is founded upon a purely religious basis, which not only strengthens but perpetuates the custom. It is a touching instance of the king's filial piety, deplorably mistaken, but perfectly sincere . . . his subjects would deem it impious were he to curtail or to omit the performance, and suddenly to suppress it would be as if a European monarch were forcibly to abolish prayers for the dead'.

The victims of these rituals were, apart from local criminals, principally the captives taken in the regular and obligatory annual campaign.

'Amazon', late 1840s: the earliest detailed eye-witness representation, by F.E. Forbes (1851). See colour plates, figure A.

Dahomean military aggression towards its neighbours was not based on territorial aggrandisement, but rather on this need to maintain the supply of captives necessary for performing the essential business of the state, economic and ritual. To meet these objectives Dahomey needed to maintain a large standing army which, in its organisation, equipment and tactics, was fitted to perform as a head-hunting and slave-taking force.

'Having been the essential element in the building up of this West African Prussia, warfare remained equally a central factor in the maintenance of its political structure and its religion.' (Robert S. Smith: *Kingdoms of the Yoruba*).

ARMY ORGANISATION

Ruling out some of the wilder exaggerations, there seems to be a general consensus amongst various 19th-century observers that the maximum force that the King of Dahomey could put into the field was in the region of

some 12,000 regular warriors, with a rather smaller number of fighting men drawn from the 'lévée en masse' to which all Dahomean males were theoretically liable. The total population of the kingdom at this time has been estimated at between 150,000 and 200,000 souls, which perhaps errs on the conservative side, but shows nonetheless how the Dahomean military mobilisation compares favourably with contemporary European practice.

Depending on the line of march to be taken on the annual military campaign, levies were raised only from certain provinces of the kingdom. At the time of mobilisation sacks of pebbles representing the head-count of all males over 13 were sent from the villages to the capital. The village contingents were then allocated to the various army corps by the king himself at a special ceremony. 'After the campaign, the commander of each corps would indicate how many men had been sent to him from each village, and if the number was not equal to one half of the pebbles in the sack for that village the village chief was strangled' (Herskovits).

Such levies, although they were required to be armed, were not front-line troops, and represented only the reserve elements of a military organisation whose cadres were maintained as a body of troops permanently under arms around the capital, Abomey, and as garrisons in the provincial capitals and on the frontiers. These latter displayed all the characteristics of a regular army.

This army was organised into two wings, with the officers of the Right ranked higher than those of the Left — a distinction marked by their position relative to the throne on great state occasions. Each wing was made up of two divisions, each under its respective officer.

The *Min-Gan* was the principal officer of the Right and chief minister of the kingdom. Under him was the *Gau*, the military commander-in-chief. On the Left was the *Meu* (second chief minister) and the *Po-Su* (deputy commander-in-chief).

The main body of the Dahomean army was made up of a number of separate corps (named as 'regiments' or 'companies' by European observers), distinctively uniformed, and allocated in equal proportions to the four major divisions. As a general reserve there was the king's guard, known as the *Blou* or 'English' company.

The 'Amazons'

Parallel to this male army, and organised on similar lines, were the female troops described as 'Amazons' by the Europeans; to the Dahomeans they were known as *Meno* (our mothers) or *Ahosi* (the king's wives) and as such their persons were strictly inviolate. Enforced celibacy was the rule, and this unnatural state of affairs may explain the ferocity they habitually displayed in

TABLE OF DAHOMEAN UNIFORMS

Source: Duncan (1847)			
Unit	*Headgear*	*Tunic*	*Other Features*
Amazons	White cap with blue crocodile	Blue and white stripes	
Forbes (1851)			
Amazons	White cap with two blue crocodiles	Blue and white stripes	Red, white and blue stripes on trousers
Amazons	White cap with a blue cross	"	
Amazons	White cap with a blue crown	"	
'Bushrangers'		Long green grass cloaks	Three stripes of white-wash round leg
Guard Amazons	Red cap	Red/scarlet/crimson	
Auguste Bouet (1851)			
'Compagnie de gardes'		Blue, with red border. Appliqué animal on breast and back	Short white trousers
'Deuxieme compagnie'		Red	"
Burton (1864)			
Bayoneteers	Blue cap with a white 'heraldic eye' (black dot between two horizontal parentheses)	Blue	
'*Blou*' or English Company	White caps or fillets with blue appliqué crocodile	Blue	
Amazon Fanti Company	White fillets with blue crocodiles	Blue	
'Blunderbuss Women'	Red 'nightcaps'	Blue	
Bayoneteer Women	Red 'liberty caps' with silver sharks (officers)	Blue with white patch on shoulder	White sash
Skertchly (1871)			
Escort to king's half-brother	White 'glengarry' with a blue trefoil on the side	Various colours	White cross belts
'*Achi*' (Bayoneteers)	Blue with a white eye	Blue with scarlet border	No bayonets
'*Gan-u'-nlan*' (Tower Gun Company)		Dark grey with an abundance of white cowries sewn on the seams	Scarlet tassels on bandolier
Ashanti Company	Leopard/civet skin or artificial velveteen	Blue	Leopard skin kilt, with knee and ankle bands of the same
'*Agbaraya*' (Amazon Lifeguards)	White fillet with blue alligator	Blue	Grey petticoat reaching to the knee
		Pale blue with yellow cross-belts	'Long Dane' gun painted blue
Blunderbuss Women	Scarlet 'liberty caps' with white fishes on left side	Blue with white cross-belts	Goatskin bandolier with red tassels
'Forlorn Hope'			Kilts and chaplets of palm leaves
Elephant Huntresses		Indigo	Dull brown petticoat, black sash

'Amazones traversant un torrent': *French engraving, 1850s. Probably based on the Forbes picture, with additional material from the reports of Catholic missionaries. The large single (rather than double) 'agbaja' is mentioned in other sources, as is the Amazons' practice of marching with sloped arms.*

Below:
'Amazon', gala dress, 1860s, from an engraving in Burton. The artist has drawn a composite figure based on descriptions of a number of different units. The white headband with blue crocodile was unique to the reserve corps (cf. colour figure A), while the coiffure is that of the Right Wing.

action. They had first been formed as a small royal bodyguard in the 18th century, but the corps was greatly expanded under King Ghezo (1818-58), who was the first to use them in foreign wars. The flower of the corps perished in the defeat before the Yoruba city of Abeokuta (1851); and from a maximum strength of perhaps 6,000 it declined to a figure averaging only 3,000 for the latter half of the century.

The Amazon army, like its male counterpart, was made up of two wings, each of two divisions, with the king's bodyguard of the 'Fanti' or 'Gold Coast' company as a separate reserve.

As sub-units of the four main divisions in each of the male and female armies, the kings of Dahomey were constantly raising and disbanding a succession of 'regiments'. Such units might be named after a particular 'colonel'; in commemoration of a particular royal achievement or saying (punning, epigrammatic statements were reckoned a great accomplishment amongst Dahomean kings); or after an admired neighbouring warrior race (mention has been made of the 'English' and 'Fanti' companies: there was also an 'Ashanti' company raised under King Gelele, 1858-88 — see colour plate E). One recalls that contemporary European monarchs operated a similar system, naming regiments after their foreign cousins.

UNIFORMS & EQUIPMENT

The Fon army was unique amongst West African states in that its warriors were dressed in a distinctive military uniform. Indeed, the complex pattern of regimental distinctions noted by European observers could be matched elsewhere in Black Africa only in the Zulu kingdom. The details of Dahomean military dress are given at greater length in the notes to the colour illustrations, but the basic pattern remained consistent from at least the 1840s to the fall of the kingdom some 50 years later.

The headgear was a low-crowned cotton cap, sometimes with descending ear-pieces, and usually bearing a regimental device in appliqué cloth. The sleeveless tunic (*akasa*) reached to mid-thigh, and was worn over a pair of loose trousers reaching just below the knee; a kilt was sometimes worn as well, reaching to just above the knee. The tunic was held snug to the figure by a belt carrying either a cartridge box of European pattern, a local style of belly pouch (*agbaja*), or an open bandolier. Depending on the period, the military appearance was further enhanced by a pair of black or white cross-belts carrying a pouch on the right and a side-arm on the left.

Individual contingents were distinguished by the colour of the headgear and the device upon it, by the colour of the tunic and the devices sewn on breast and seams, by the length of the trousers, and by supplementary marks applied to the face and limbs as a form of 'war-paint'. Some of the uniform details noted by European observers are shown in the accompanying table.

At least in the case of the Amazons, there was a clear distinction between parade and campaign dress. In addition, several observers noted that 'scout' or 'bushranger' companies wore a form of camouflage dress consisting of grass cloaks, kilts and chaplets. 'Some added a necklace standing up like the collars of Good Queen Bess' (Skertchley, 1874).

Weapons

All of the king's regular troops were supplied with firearms and ammunition from the royal arsenals, purchased in large quantities from the profits of the slave and palm oil trade. Such equipment was subject to regular and scrupulous inspection.

Until the eve of the French invasion the standard Dahomean firearm was a flintlock smoothbore musket, imported from various European sources. Throughout the 19th century the most consistently popular model was the so-called 'Long Dane', based on an original Danish design and dis-

tinguished by a barrel 'one and a half hands longer' than the English Tower musket or 'Brown Bess'. The latter was nevertheless still widely used, as were short cavalry firearms (notably the French model 1822 carbine). Small blunderbusses were also in vogue, being allocated to a special 'artillery' corps, and prized for the terror inspired by their prodigious discharges.

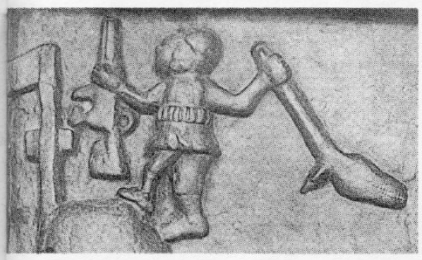
The kingdom possessed quantities of old ships' cannon, two or three of which were occasionally taken on campaign mounted on local carriages. Like the blunderbusses, they were used as terror weapons, the noise being more important than any projectile.

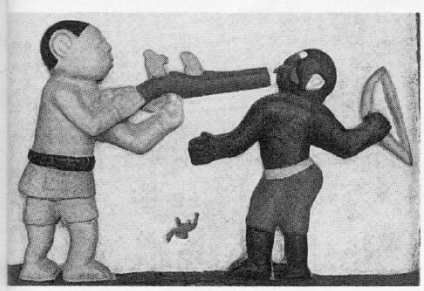
The percussion cap never caught on in Dahomey, the flintlock retaining its popularity due to its relatively robust and simple construction, capable of being repaired in local workshops. Once imported, the muskets were subjected to certain local refinements. The stocks were often painted, and decorated with cowrie shells, reputedly distributed by the king on the basis of the number of heads brought in by the owner. The locks were fitted with a conical damp-weather cover of black monkey skin made to slide along the barrel, and a leather muzzle cap of the same was fitted by means of a strap or thong.

The leather *agbaja* belly pouch (see colour illustrations) was a uniquely local design, worn either singly or in pairs around the waist. It contained up to 'twenty cartridges [with] about four times the quantity [of powder] of that used in England' (Duncan, 1847). African powder generally had a lower saltpetre content, giving a weaker charge, which explains this difference. 'These cartridges have lids to them, and contain about a handful of coarse powder. The lids were taken off and held in the mouth while the powder was poured down the gun, which was generally held slanting, not with the butt resting on the ground. A few jerks brought the powder down to the breech and a few pinches of priming from a small pouch on the right side, completed the loading'.

Eye-witness accounts most commonly were of court ceremonials, where the muskets were generally fired from the hip, but other evidence shows that aimed fire from the shoulder was also practised in action. The projectile (either ball, small shot, slugs or short bolts of bar iron) was

continued on page 14





Above:
Bas-relief from the royal palace at Abomey (from Waterlot, 1926): mythical warrior, symbolising the Sôflimatan ('Furious Antelope') regiment raised under King Gelele. Typical Dahomean military equipment of musket, bandolier, bullet bag and sabre, and dressed in the characteristic short trousers.

Centre:
Bas-relief from the palace of Agaja (Waterlot): capture of a town in the Mahi country. The Dahomean warrior, dressed in cap, tunic, bandolier and trousers, has planted his flag in token of possession. The recade *(baton) which he brandishes marks him out as an officer.*

Bottom:
Bas-relief from Abomey (Waterlot), showing the triumph of Dahomean technical superiority over more primitive neighbours. It indicates that firing from the shoulder was not unknown in action, although most Europeans witnessed only the firing from the hip used at court displays.

Colour plates: Angus McBride's reconstructions overleaf illustrate:

(A) 'Amazon', late 1840s
*The tunic (*akasa*) was a distinctive item of military dress and remained in use until the overthrow of the kingdom. The striped pattern was replaced by a plain, medium blue version under King Gelele (1858-89). She is armed with a 'Long Dane' trade musket with the stock painted according to local taste; a long-bladed knife (*hwisu*); and an iron-studded hardwood club (*makpo*) used when the object was capture rather than killing. The crocodile on the cap was the distinguishing mark of the King's or Reserve Company, and commemorated the killing of such an animal by the corps during the course of the 1845 campaign.*

(B) 'Amazon', gala dress, 1860s
Based on detailed descriptions in Burton. Although a blue akasa *was now the standard army uniform the 'Amazon' corps wore this special order of dress for court ceremonials. The colours of the vest (*akon-aou*) and skirt were not standardised, but blue, pink and yellow were the most common. Her coiffure marks her out as belonging to the Right Wing of the corps, those of the Left leaving their hair 'au naturelle' and the Reserve being shaved '*a la turban*' (Burton). Her weapon, to be furiously brandished during one of the dancing displays that marked most Dahomean court rituals, is the machete-like* houi *('coupe-coupe' to the French).*

(C) 'Amazon', campaign dress, 1890s
Apart from the Winchester rifle, which along with other modern weapons was issued only to the élite corps, her appearance is typical of the 'battle-dress' worn by the Dahomean army on its last campaign. The akasa *is dyed in the local equivalent of 'butternut' (stained with blood and barks); grey was also a common colour for war tunics. Note the quantities of protective charms. The headgear, here a locally made straw hat, was left to individual taste and could equally be an imported European felt, white cotton 'night-cap' or the full dress uniform cap. The side- arm, normally carried thrust under the belt, is the local form of hoe — a formidable close-quarters weapon particularly favoured by the 'Amazons'. A pack cradle for a bed mat, spare clothes and food for a fortnight was carried on the head, with the rifle slung; it seems to have resembled a modern pack-board with side rails.*

(D) Warrior, 'Gan-u'-nlan' (Tower Gun Company), 1860s
From a description in Skertchly; the name of the unit means 'conquerors of all animals'. The grey tunic, with cowries on the seams, was unique to this unit: and the red tassels on the agbaja *marked it out as belonging to the 'artillery' corps (along with the blunderbusseers). Striped material remained in vogue at this period only for the* chokoto *(trousers). The Tower musket, which was carried by all members of this unit, shows the details of the locally-fitted lock and muzzle covers, and the ribbon, tassel, and cowrie shell ornamentation widely used on Dahomean firearms. The tooled leather bullet pouch was a common item of equipment for warriors armed with muzzle loaders. His facial scarification marks him out as a native Fon, rather than a conscript from one of the subject tribes. Observers noted that smallpox pitting was very common.*

(E) Warrior, Ashanti Company, 1870s
From a description by Skertchly, who was made an officer in the corps. The leopardskin insignia was distinctive to this unit, which was formed in honour of the kingdom's powerful warrior neighbours (there was also a 'Koomassie palace' built near Abomey). The gunpowder streaks on nose and cheeks were also a unit distinction. The white trousers, edged black, are mentioned in a description of the king's outfit when he was wearing a 'gala dress' of the corps. The cap is of leopardskin in this case, but could equally be of civet or 'artificial velveteen'. The blue akasa *and white crossbelts were now the standard army uniform. The weapon is a French flintlock cavalry carbine, amongst the most popular of imported firearms according to Bayol (1892).*

(F1) Headgear, Blunderbuss Women, 1870s
The shark was a royal symbol. This shape of cap was a common alternative to that shown in figure A. Other cap devices are listed in the table of uniforms.

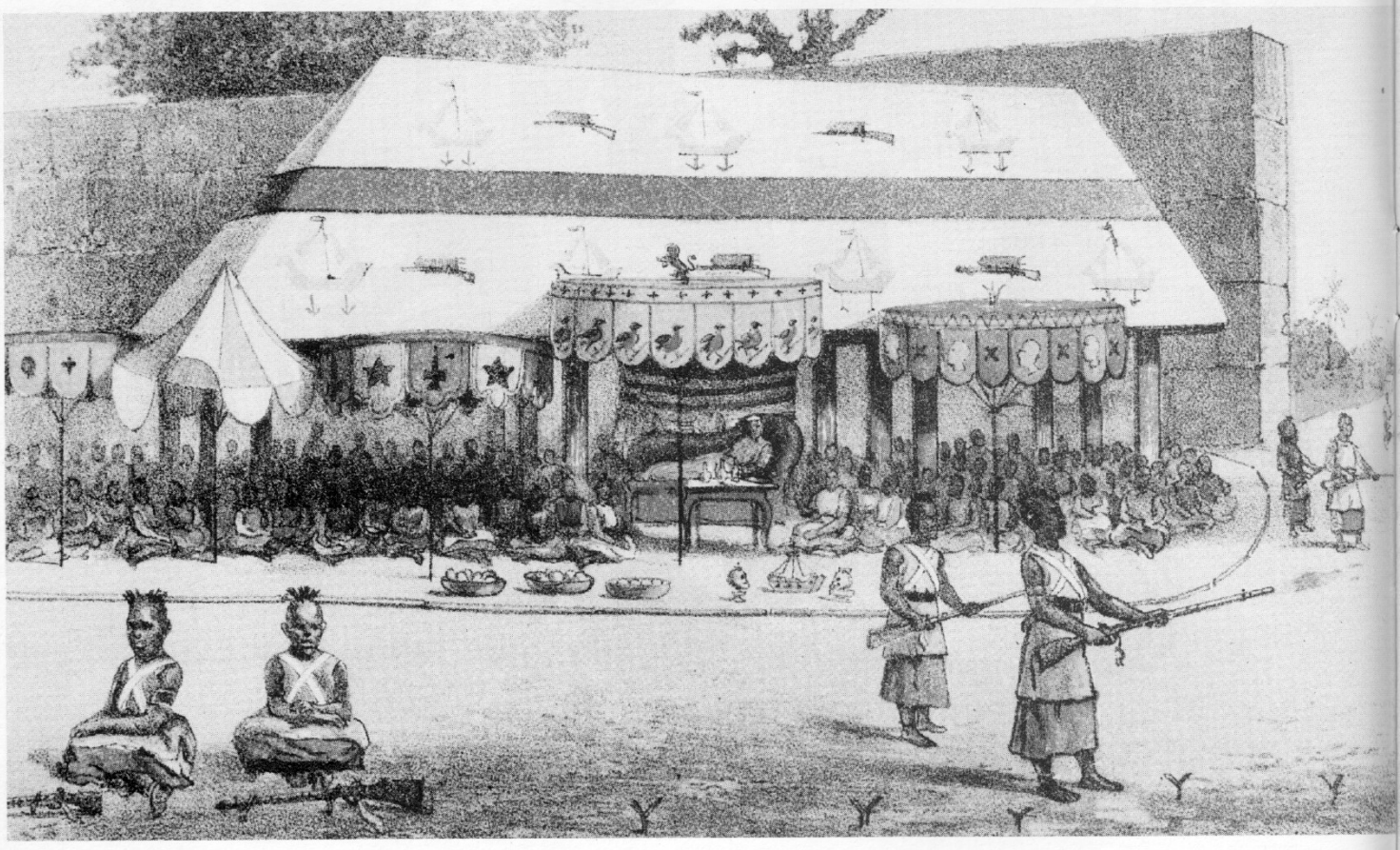
(F2) Large belly-pouch, all periods
*Detail of the Dahomean cartridge belt (*agbaja*), from the* Church Missionary Gleaner, *1852, showing an example recovered from the field after the Dahomean defeat at Abeokuta the previous year. Although black covers were the most common, goatskin covers are also mentioned. Note small priming powder bag.*

A
C
B
Angus McBride

D
E
F1
F2

Above:
The reception at Kana, from Skertchly (1871); note 'Amazons' in the background, in tunics of blue and red, with white crossbelts. The umbrella shading the king is an imported European model but those in the background are of native design and were important tokens of rank; the devices on the lappets are a form of heraldry, indicative of the owner's exploits. Severed heads are noticeably the most popular motif.

Below:
The 'Gun Custom', from Skertchly. The royal pavilion is decorated with the emblems of previous kings, and there is a line of demarcation around the king's person marked out with stripped palm branches (called 'bamboos' in the literature). The Amazons are in parade dress, wearing petticoats rather than trousers, and firing 'feux de joie' from the hip. Note white crossbelts; tufted hairstyle; and Y-shaped sticks thrust into ground as gun-rests.



either thrown in loose, or with a wadding made from palm leaf fibre or the leaf sheathing from an ear of maize (the latter apparently producing particularly dense black smoke). European observers differed in their opinions of Dahomean marksmanship, Forbes being loud in his praise while Burton and Skertchley were very scathing. The French experience would suggest that, in combat, the Dahomeans favoured rapidity of fire over accuracy.

The modern breechloading rifles of the French were a revelation to the Dahomeans when they first encountered them at Cotonou in 1890, and King Behanzin made frantic efforts to catch up in the contemporary arms race. In the next 18 months large numbers of modern weapons were imported through German traders at Whydah. These included 400 Peabodys, 230 Winchesters, 750 Chassepots, 250 Albinis, 250 Spencers and 300 Sniders, six Krupp cannon and five machine guns (including two *mitrailleuses*, one of which is still on display at the cultural museum at Abomey: it bears the name 'Marechal de Marailhac', and was captured by the Germans in 1870).

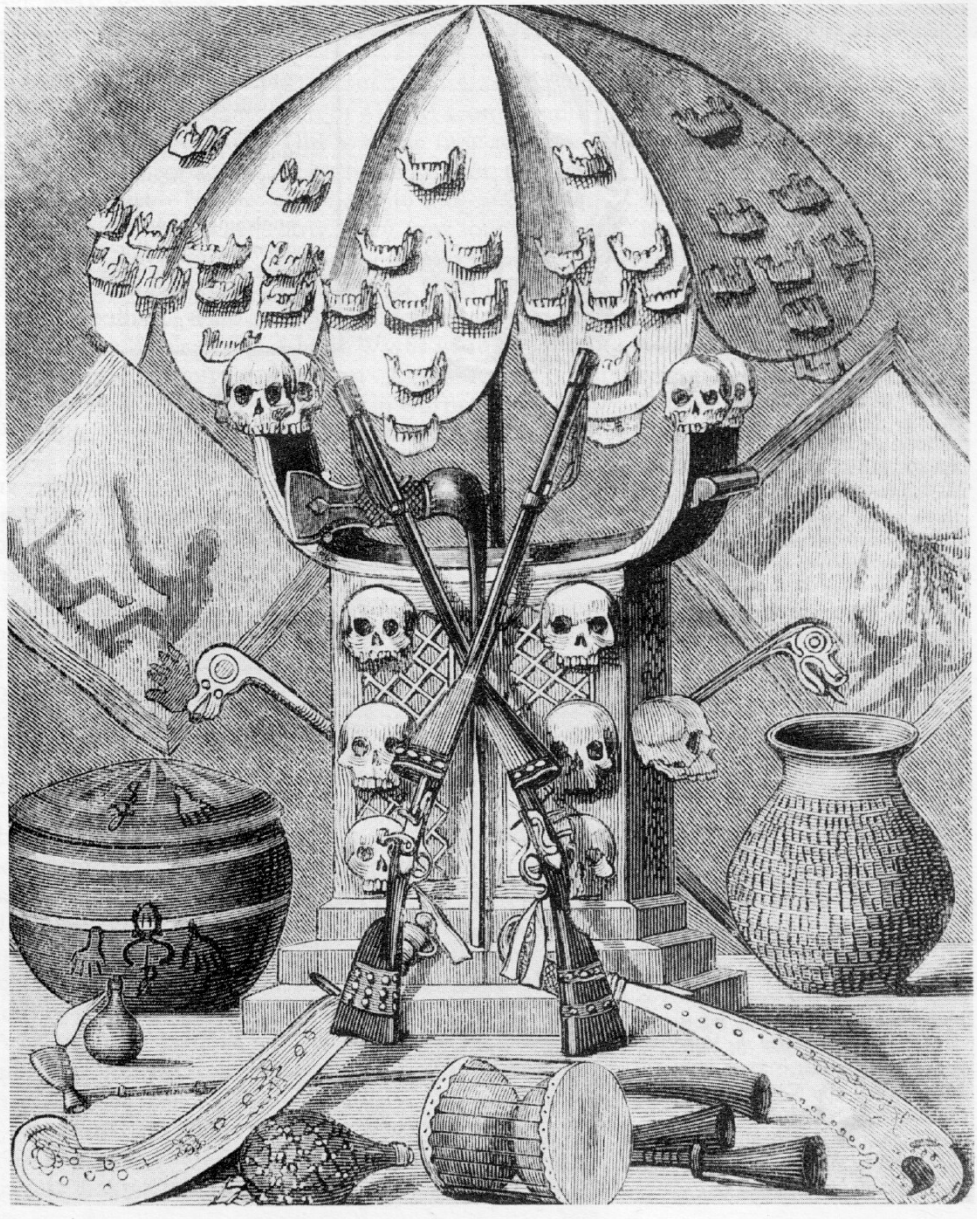
The Dahomean soldiers lacked the training to make proper use of such weapons, however (continuing to fire from a standing position, and retiring to reload), and the technical skills to maintain them, and they were of value mainly for the initial psychological shock they caused the French. The artillery was occasionally well handled, crewed by an assortment of European renegades and Whydah mulattos, but the ammunition was generally faulty.

TRAINING AND TACTICS

Like their contemporary European counterparts, Dahomean soldiers spent much of their time training for ceremonial duties rather than the realities of combat. They do seem to have had rather greater opportunities for training in weapon handling, however, since most court ceremonials were accompanied by displays of marksmanship and extensive '*feux de joie*', at which enormous amounts of ammunition were expended.

Certain peacetime displays also closely simulated the essentials of Dahomean battle tactics. New regiments were traditionally 'blooded' by practising assault tactics upon a drill ground . . . 'where there had been raised a bank of thorny bushes about 400 metres long, 6 broad and 2 high. 40 paces beyond and parallel to this heap rose the framework of a house of the same width but about 5 metres broad and high . . . covered with a thick bed of the same thorns. Fifteen paces beyond was a row of huts. The whole represented a fortified town . . . the bare footed warriors were to surmount three times the heap of thorns which represented the curtain of the works, descend into the clear space which took the place of the ditch, escalade the house, which represented a citadel bristling with defenders, and go on to take the town simulated by the row of huts . . . ' Whipped up into a state of patriotic frenzy by a royal harangue, they ' . . . throw themselves with indescribable fury . . . upon the thorny obstacles . . . and that though their naked feet are pierced in all directions' (Journal of Father Borghéro, 1851).

Such training was an ideal preparation for the typical Dahomean campaign, which would generally culminate in an assault of one of the fortified towns of their long-suffering neighbours. Secrecy was the watchword, with night marches and sudden changes of direction being regularly employed to disguise the ultimate objective. Spies reconnoitred the enemy town, secret agents sought to sabotage the local fetishes, and the camouflaged scout companies — described above — preceded the main



Royal treasures (Skertchly): the jaw umbrella, royal stool, flags and weaponry. The stool and sabres compare well with surviving examples, so the other items are probably more or less accurately depicted. The details of the characteristic local musket furniture may be made out (see colour plates, figure D). Skulls and jawbones were popular items of Dahomean regalia: a jawbone mounted on a brass plate, and worn like a sporran, was particularly in vogue amongst the 'Amazon' officer corps.

Légionnaire of the Bataillon de Marche *in Dahomey, 1892: a well-known drawing by Maurice Mahut. He wears the 1886 cork tropical helmet with a drab light brown cover, probably secured by the white top ventilator of the helmet being removed and replaced outside the cover. The jacket is a collarless 1892* paletot, *normally associated with the* Tirailleurs Sénégalais, *in a warm khaki colour; it had four brass uniform buttons down the front, no external pockets, and no vents; for the Legion it bore dark blue braid around the neck and cuffs. The white fatigue trousers are roughly tied off at the ankle. Ammunition for the single-shot bolt-action 1874 Gras rifle is carried in two 1877 'coffin' belt pouches; and in the improvised 'de Négrier' chest pouch made in black, white, or other old uniform cloth. The 1872 two-litre, two-spout* bidon *is covered with blue-grey coat cloth; the musette on the left hip is of light drab brown; and the blue-grey 1872 greatcoat is worn in a horseshoe roll. The Gras bayonet is invisible here, under the musette; the légionnaire appears to have a short machete slung on his belt behind the right hip. (Livre d'Or)*

THE FRENCH INVASION

The overthrow of the Fon Kingdom was accomplished in three phases:

(1) First conflicts, 1890

On 22 February 360 French Marines seized the coastal town of Cotonou, and held it against successive attacks by Dahomean local forces, provincial levies and finally (on 4 March) by the main field army. In April the French transferred forces to Porto Novo, and commenced raiding operations which provoked a second major action at Atchoupa, a further French victory. A treaty in October gave uneasy recognition to the occupation of Cotonou.

(2) Invasion, 1892

On 27 March Dahomean provincial troops gave the French a *causus belli* by firing on the gunboat *Topaze*, cruising in disputed waters on the River Ouème. Col. Alfred Amédée Dodds, the local commander in Senegal, was appointed to lead the *Corps Expeditionnaire Français*, which he assembled at Porto Novo between June and August. Its total strength of some 3,000 troops, plus at least 1,000 path-clearers and porters, included 150 *Infanterie de Marine*; an 800-strong *Bataillon de Marche* of the *Légion Étrangère*; ten companies of *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* and *Haoussa*; a battery of mountain artillery, two squadrons of *Spahis Sénégalais*, and engineer, transport and ambulance units. The column set out on 30 August for Abomey, some 65 miles up-country, through extremely punishing swamp and forest country. Their line of advance followed the east bank of the River Ouémé, and was covered by the stern-wheel gunboat *Opale*.

At Dogba on 19 September the French advance guard was surprised in a dawn attack on their entrenched night camp by the main Dahomean army. The square was penetrated, and the bayonet charge which cleared it cost the life of the Legion commander, Cdt.Faurax. After two hours' close fighting the attackers were repulsed, suffering at least 800 dead; French casualties were 45 dead and 60 wounded.

Initial French attempts to force a way through earthworks defending the line of the river were unsuccessful. A crossing was effected on 2 October under cover of thick fog; but a series of furious counterattacks, which several times came to close quarters (one unfortunate Marine had his nose bitten off by an Amazon) slowed the French advance to a crawl. A successful defence of the River Koto on 14 October forced a French withdrawal, and they broke through only after a fortnight's rest and re-supply.

But the end was now in sight; the cream of the Dahomean army, with almost the entire Amazon corps, had been lost in a succession of costly attacks. Despite continual skirmishes the French pressed on; the royal palace at Kana fell on 6 November, and finally, on the 17th, the newly-promoted Gen. Dodds occupied Abomey. It was a hollow victory — the king had set fire to the city and fled north.

(3) Conquest and Annexation

Behanzin evaded the French flying columns for a further 14 months, and surrendered only in January 1894 after his brother had been set up as a puppet ruler. The truncated kingdom was soon absorbed into the French colonial empire.

body. Wherever possible the assault was launched as a dawn attack, with the warriors advancing 'in heavy squadrons, with flying colours' (Bowen, 1857). In any escalade it was usually the Amazons who were in the forefront. In the attack on Abeokuta (1851), where they were first employed on a foreign campaign, their true identity was revealed only when the defenders attempted to castrate the first of these redoubtable she-warriors to scale the ramparts!

At their best in surprise attacks, the Dahomeans lacked staying power against a determined opponent. Abeokuta was one such, a rich and populous city; but the universally unsuccessful expeditions launched against it by the 19th century Dahomean kings nevertheless effectively prevented Yoruba penetration into the Fon kingdom.

The Dahomean army was essentially an instrument of terror, designed to keep potentially stronger neighbours in awe of a relatively small kingdom. The French were not so easily impressed, and their bolt-action rifles and modern artillery gave them a decisive advantage. (Wolseley's hard-fought campaign against the Ashanti — which Dodds had studied closely — shows the difference that only 20 years could make to the tactical balance.) But despite its technological inferiority the Dahomean army fought the French every step of the way to Abomey; and this last campaign — the first defensive action fought in living memory — does much to redeem its fighting reputation. Deluded, perhaps, by their own military propaganda, their prevailing mood was one of shock and disbelief, well expressed in these words of survivors quoted in *Le Hérissé: 'Si on avait su les Français si forts . . . ils avaient des fusils qui trouaient les palmiers!'* ('If we had only known that the French were so strong — they had rifles which cut through palm trees!') MI

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British Commandos in the Field 1942-45 (2)

BRIEN HOBBS Paintings by PAUL HANNON

Part 1 of this article ('*MI*' No.26) described and illustrated uniform and insignia, equipment and small arms practice in France, Madagascar and Tunisia, 1942; the Belgian and Polish elements of No.10 IA Cdo. in the Mediterranean, 1943-44; and NW Europe, from Normandy to VE-Day. This concluding part covers operations in Sicily, Italy, and the Balkans; the Far East; Royal Navy Commando Beach Parties and FOBs; and 30 Commando.

SICILY, SALERNO AND TERMOLI

In July 1943 the 2nd Special Service Brigade consisted of No.3 Cdo., 40 RM Cdo. and 41 RM Cdo. plus 1st Special Raiding Squadron temporarily under command; No.2 Cdo. arrived toward the end of the Sicilian campaign. For the Sicily landing each unit was allocated objectives to be neutralised (for example, coastal batteries and strong points) or held until relieved by elements of the main landing force (for example the bridge near Agnone by No.3 Commando). After further minor operations the brigade was divided, No.3 Cdo., 40 RM Cdo. and 1st SRS eventually securing Termoli in advance of the 78th Division. No.2 Cdo. and 41 RM Cdo. were used to knock out a coastal battery on the left flank of the Salerno landings, and to hold the high ground dominating the main road from Salerno toward the plain of Naples.

Both tasks were intended to be of short duration, but both ended in severe fighting which tested all involved to the limit. As a result the lightly equipped Commandos were considerably beefed up with more LMGs and heavy weapons [1].

All assault troops wore 'KD longs' with either KD shirt (or, later, American OD shirt [2]) or four-pocket KD bush jacket. This clothing was replaced after Termoli. Some Army Commandos, notably Brigade troops, wore insignia on bush jackets: the 'COMMANDO' shoulder title in red on midnight blue above circular Combined Ops. badge [3]. Photographs of 41 RM Cdo. show no insignia whatsoever, and it is believed that the same was true of 40 RM Commando. Steel helmets were worn by all except 1st SRS, and No.3 Cdo. who adopted the green beret in action for the first time [4/5]).

Generally, troops landed in Full Fighting Order with small packs, with their large packs left to follow them ashore later. The Battle Jerkin, a dark brown canvas 'fighting waistcoat' with ample storage space for ammunition and equipment was issued to at least one section of 41 RM Commando [6]. This was the first active trial of such equipment, although there are no indications as to how they got on with it. Some jerkins were made available to 10 Bn. RM and 40 RM Cdo. for trials on the Isle of Wight in summer and autumn 1942. It was not popular in warm weather due to its tendency to retain body heat.

A member of Q Tp., RM Cdo. described a typical ordnance load for one rifleman, in addition to his personal small arms ammunition issue, as: 3 x 36 Grenades, 1 x 68 Grenade (smoke), 2 x Bren magazines and a spare bandolier of 50 rounds; Tommy gunners carried 10 × 20-round magazines of .45 in. in lieu of .303 in. [7]

Units had the Projector Infantry Anti-Tank (PIAT) from this time, plus the 'EY' rifle — this was a redundant SMLE fitted with a dis-

Above:
Members of 41 RM Commando 'ammunition up' prior to the Sicily landings, July 1943. Some wear the four-pocket KD 'bush' jacket, others the shirt. All are in Fighting Order, with toggle rope, small arms ammunition bandoliers, and the Assault Life Jacket. It was members of this unit who used the Battle Jerkin in action for the first time during these landings: see 'MI' No.29, p.39. (Royal Marines Museum).

Left:
Gunner George Deaker of No.2 Cdo. wearing the KD shirt with red on blue '2 COMMANDO' shoulder titles and the unit's black/white lanyard. The OR's distinctive cap badge — a white metal dagger on a triangular black backing — is clearly visible. (S.O.Buckmaster)

Members of 5 Tp., No.2 Cdo. at Monopoli after raiding Spilje in July 1944. Battle Jerkins are worn by two of the Bren group; the gunner, far right, wears his over what appears to be a camouflage smock made locally from Italian material. (S.O.Buckmaster)

charger cup, firing grenades by means of a ballistite cartridge. It was carried in addition to the rifleman's personal weapon, which was still the No.1 Mk.III SMLE. The breech was heavily bound with wire to prevent the powerful cartridge blowing parts of the bolt into the user, the rifle being fired with the butt in the ground, magazine uppermost [8]. At Salerno riflemen from 41 RM Cdo. carried a land mine each, slung round the neck prior to dumping it at a secure point after landing.

ITALY AND THE BALKANS, 1944-45

By early 1944, 2nd SS Brigade's strength had been established at four units: 40 RM Cdo., 43 RM Cdo., No.2 Cdo. and No.9 Commando [9]. In spite of this, these units did not operate together under command of 2nd SS Bde. until April 1945. At least one, and usually two units were detached for operations under various commands at any one time.

They all laboured under difficult circumstances as the European 'poor relations', due mainly to the logistic and manning requirements of Operation 'Overlord'. (No.9 Cdo., for instance, was reduced to half strength from its usual complement of about 500 by the second phase of the Anzio battle.) This particularly applied to reinforcements for the Army units, the last complete draft from Achnacharry arriving in about March. Eventually some 50 per cent of volunteers came from second-line units within the Mediterranean theatre. These were assimilated into the units, via their own training programme, after the usual sifting out of unsuitable candidates. The Royal Marine units also suffered to a certain extent, 40 RM Cdo. in particular complaining after the Termoli battle that the Commandos were being used as a dumping ground for unscrupulous commanding officers anxious to get rid of undesirables.

Units had to deal with real problems of misuse while temporarily under 'foreign' command. Difficulties with resupply, co-ordination of artillery/mortar/MG support and so on were particularly noticeable during the second phase of Anzio, where the units carried out offensive patrols. The 2nd SS Bde. did not take part in any distinctive actions, such as Normandy or Cassino, and were generally used for unglamorous tasks compared to other brigades.

Even when, as 2nd Commando Bde., it finally operated as a whole at Comacchio and Argenta (both extremely difficult and successful operations), credit was given to the 56th Division, under whose command they were at the time.

Until the issue of the Denison smock in March 1944, units in Italy wore conventional battledress or, as 43 RM Cdo. at Monte Ornito, denims, the leather jerkin supplementing these in cold weather. Insignia were rarely worn by this time, with the exception of elements of No.2 Cdo. operating from Vis. Although badges of rank were generally shown, an interesting variation in No.9 Cdo. was that officers usually wore a strip of white tape on the epaulette in lieu of pips, to aid recognition in the dark. During operations in warm weather denim battledress or shirts and both shorts and and trousers of khaki drill were worn, the four-pocket KD bush jacket having been discarded; the khaki pullover was worn over KD where necessary. Alternatively, OD shirts of American origin [10] or certain items of South African Army issue were seen — light blue shirts were worn throughout by two South African officers and also by ORs of No.2 Cdo. late in the war. Brown leather boots from the same source were also worn.

Insignia in 2nd SS Bde. during this period provided a few interesting variations, particularly in No.2 Commando. In this unit two titles could be seen. '2 COMMANDO'

in red on midnight blue was by far the most common; but also seen was the 'No.2 COMMANDO' title. The latter was probably worn by reinforcements from Achnacharry, as opposed to volunteers from the Mediterranean. Both were worn concurrently from late 1944, although it is highly likely that men wearing it would be required to shorten the longer title to comply with the rest of the unit. The '2 COMMANDO' title was also worn on the KD shirt in the summer of 1944, mainly as walking-out dress, but occasionally in the field[11].

Towards the end of 1944 at least 40 per cent of No.2 Cdo. were qualified as parachutists at No.4 Parachute School, Goia delle Colle — and an even higher proportion of 5 Troop. (No.9 Cdo., 40 RM Cdo. and 43 RM Cdo. certainly had a few parachutists, but no particular effort was made to qualify members of these units; the majority of those in No.9 Cdo. came from No.12 Cdo. when it was disbanded.) The parachute wings for qualified ranks of No.2 Cdo. were unique in that they took conventional form but with a *black* background. When the wings were worn on the right shoulder, only the right-hand Combined Ops. badge was deleted (four ranks including Maj. Stilwell, OC 1 Tp., qualified at Ringway and wore the parachute wings on the right forearm). No.9 Cdo. parachute insignia was worn as for No.3 Cdo.; parachutists in 40 RM Cdo. and 43 RM Cdo. are assumed to have been badged as for those in 45 RM Cdo., although no further information is available.

The No.9 Cdo. shoulder title, '9 COMMANDO' in black with white lettering, was superceded after a tour of duty on Gibraltar in 1943 by the familiar red on midnight blue title in the same form. By this time 40 RM Cdo. and 43 RM Cdo. wore the same insignia as RM Commandos in Normandy.

At Monte Ornito, 43 RM Cdo. wore soft headgear and suffered considerably as a result, since splinters of rock added to the lethal effects of mortar and artillery fire. After this the steel helmet was universally worn by all ranks in action. The exceptions to this were when stealth was required, such as on patrol or night work. For example, some of 40 RM Cdo. wore green berets at Anzio [12]. The Brigade's Medical Officer went so far as to declare that any head-wounds resulting from disobedience to the orders to wear helmets would be sent to the back of the queue!

RM units were more inclined to wear soft headgear than their Army brethren. One notable example was the follow-up of the German withdrawal from Greece by No.9 Cdo. with elements of SBS and RAF Parachute Levies. No.9 Cdo. wore their green berets with the black hackle [13], which originated with Lt. Col. Pedder of No.11 Cdo., and was also worn by No.9 Cdo. in the khaki Tam-o'-Shanter. Later this was worn in the green beret, although the Tam-o'-Shanter with hackle was retained as working/fatigue headgear, and also as soft headgear in the line.

Footwear consisted of the usual black rubber-soled SV boot and the brown South African boot referred to earlier. Also worn were rope-soled slippers for MTB boarding parties; and a boot with suede outermost for hot climates — these items were soon discontinued.

Equipment and weapons

Webbing in all units was unexceptional, apart from No.2 Cdo. who had kept up the St. Nazaire tradition of white-scrubbed webbing and gaiters, allowed to become grubby in the field. This unit was also almost the only one to use the Battle Jerkin, which they called an Assault Jacket. (It was also worn by elements of 40 RM Cdo. during the initial landings in Albania in July 1944.) It was a very popular item for raiding work, although it was later limited to Bren gunners during operations in mainland Italy. The gunners also wore a pistol belt with a holstered Colt .45 over the Jerkin, enabling them to carry plenty of spare magazines [14].

Use of German weapons was forbidden throughout 2nd SS Bde. after Anzio, due to the risk of firing on friendly troops should enemy patrols infiltrate; but American weapons occasionally found their way into the units. The TSM of 5 Tp. No.9 Cdo., Jack Quarrie (later the RSM), was given an M1 carbine by an American Ranger who, having seen the .303 rifle he was carrying, promptly disappeared with the comment 'I think we can do better than that!' He returned carrying a sack containing the carbine and numerous clips of ammunition; the TSM used the weapon thereafter [15]. For no particular reason No.2 Cdo. retained their No.1 Mk.III Lee Enfields with sword bayonets.

As with their North-West European counterparts, all units taking part in operations in 1945, at Comacchio and the Argenta Gap, were virtually indistinguishable in steel helmets and Denison smocks; No.2 Cdo.'s Bren gunners wore the Battle Jerkin over the smock. All ranks in 2nd Cdo. Bde. used the conventional Mk.II helmet.

ARAKAN/BURMA
1944-45

The 3rd Special Service Brigade was formed in November 1943, initially consisting of No.5 Cdo. and 44 RM Commando. These, plus 'Howe' Party RN Cdo., were deployed for operations in the Arakan in March 1944. No.1 Cdo. joined in September, going operational two months later in Burma under XV Corps to gain experience in jungle warfare. 42 RM Cdo., the last unit to arrive, was deployed south of Maungdaw for the same reason. The re-titled 3rd Commando Bde. operated as a whole in landings at Akyab and the Myebon Peninsula, ending with fierce fighting at Kangaw. The brigade was then withdrawn for rest and recuperation. The intention was to use them for further landings in Malaya, but the end of the war made these plans redundant. Elements of the Dutch Tp. No.10 IA

Officers (rear right) and men of Support Troop, No.9 Cdo., Salonika, Greece, 1944, wearing typical barracks and internal security dress of the period; green beret with the unit's black hackle, KD shirt and shorts, khaki hose-tops, scrubbed webbing anklets and belt, and the khaki V-neck sweater. NCOs' chevrons are worn on the right arm only of the sweater; officers' rank is displayed on shirt shoulder straps buttoned through the sweater. (J.Quarrie)

Men of 43 RM Cdo. in the field at Mandriole, just prior to the battle of Comacchio in March 1945. Of interest are the shoulder titles just visible above the head of the crinkly-haired man seated at left: 'ROYAL MARINES' *over* 'COMMANDO', *over the round Combined Ops. badge, with the unit number deleted from the* 'COMMANDO' *title — but many photographs of 43 Cdo. show men only partially badged due to wear and tear, and this example is unlikely to be deliberate. Several men here wear unbadged BD blouses; Denison smocks and cap comforters are the norm — note roughly painted white chevrons displayed by the sergeant at left. (Royal Marines Museum)*

Cdo. made a brief appearance in early 1944, a few members joining patrols in the Arakan, but they were all withdrawn to the UK in preparation for the invasion of Europe.

Former members of all units have claimed that confidence was high, although encounters with the Japanese showed that, unlike the situation in Europe, the Commando reputation presented no psychological barrier to this foe. Extremely skillful radio interception and a penchant for 'ruses de guerre' on the part of the Japanese made their defeat at Kangaw all the more satisfactory for 3rd Cdo. Bde., whose reputation in the Far East could not have been higher as a result.

Most members of the brigade wore the four-pocket bush jacket in olive green; long OG trousers were either tucked in gaiters, or rolled up at the ankle with socks turned down over the gaiters. SV boots were worn initially, but canvas and rubber jungle boots were adopted later on, which extended up to mid-calf. At first the slouch hat was worn, but all units soon adopted the green beret without cap badge; steel helmets were not carried on operations.

Every man carried a machete, typically of US origin, on his webbing; this was normally replaced by a khukri, post-Kangaw, after liaison with the Gurkhas. Most supplemented their water supply with a *chuggel*, a canvas water carrier tied off at one corner (inevitably soaking the surrounding area of the body). Both the Bergen rucksack and the '08 large pack were used, with all webbing stained dark green.

Riflemen of both No.1 and No.5 Cdo. were armed with the M1 Garand [16], 42 RM Cdo. and 44 RM Cdo. retaining the .303. All units had the usual quota of Brens and Tommy guns. Heavy weapons men typically carried a Colt .45 as the sole side-arm although, when dug in, a rifle or SMG would be acquired if possible.

The four-second fuse of the hand grenade would sometimes be insufficient to allow it time to penetrate the foliage before exploding. Some members of No.1 Cdo. developed the technique of placing the grenade in an empty Capstan 50 cigarette tin. When the pin was withdrawn the spoon would thus remain

Part of a group photograph of Capt. Turner's 5 Tp., No.2 Cdo. at Bittetto, Italy, November 1944. Both officers' ('SS/dagger') and ORs' cap badges are seen here, on their black cloth triangular backing. Not so obvious, but visible (e.g. front right and centre) are the parachute wings worn by a high percentage of this group, of conventional form but worked on black cloth. They replaced the Combined Operations badge on the right upper sleeve only for parachute-trained personnel. (S.O.Buckmaster)

in place until grenade and tin parted company in mid-air; this allowed the extra second or* two necessary for the desired effect.

All Commando Troops were divided into two Sections. In this theatre the latter were redesignated 'platoons' in order to avoid confusion with the conventional infantry rifle sections of ten.

ROYAL NAVY COMMANDO BEACH PARTIES and FORWARD OBSERVER BOMBARDMENT

Although referred to generically as RN Commandos, these two units lived totally separate lives and their tasks were unconnected.

The RN Commandos provided beach reception parties capable of taking up small-scale offensive operations to secure their area, unsupported if necessary. 'On landing, our first task was to assist in taking the beach area allocated to us. On completion of this, we were split up into small groups and detailed to beach defence, beach exits, beach extremities, to mark obstructions and hazards, signalling landing craft (when ready) and get them off the beach as quickly as possible, to guide army personnel to the beach exits, help them if they got into difficulty during landing, guide reinforcements through the beachmaster and beach signals, and in general help the REs with the smooth running of the beach [17].'

These units operated in every theatre; the details below are typical of parties taking part in Operation 'Overlord'.

To carry out these tasks required a high degree of infantry training allied to the original trade. Those going ashore carried Full Fighting Order with small and large packs, toggle rope, entrenching tool and so on, plus a full complement of small arms. These weapons were of older vintage: Lewis guns, stripped of cowling, leaving the barrel, shoulder butt and hand grips; Ross rifles; Lanchester and Thompson SMGs, and Webley .455 in. revolvers.

Battledress was worn with full insignia: 'RN COMMANDO' title in white on midnight blue, with Combined Ops. badge, either in original shape or circular, on both shoulders. Beneath these on the left arm were located any rank/good conduct badges; in the same place on the right arm were positioned trade badges — anti-aircraft etc. — all in red on black background, with conventional naval insignia for working dress. Also worn was a lanyard, colour dependent on unit, for example: Roger Party — red; Howe Party — old gold. Over battledress could be worn a variety of sleeveless leather or sheepskin-lined jerkins. Beneath the jacket naval pullovers, white 'frocks' (heavy sweaters) or shirts of the wearer's choice could be worn. For various reasons some parties chose not to wear the green beret, in which case headgear consisted of a knitted hat or steel helmet [18].

The first observation teams intended to control naval gunfire support for assault infantry were officially formed in April 1942 (although in practice they had been in existence for a while beforehand). No.1 Unit was raised at HMS *Dundonald* in Scotland from volunteers from both the Royal Navy and Royal Artillery. Five Units were eventually established, known collectively as the Combined Operations Bombardment Unit (a title adopted in January 1943). The original members were used as a nucleus, at a strength of three Troops per Unit. Each Troop was commanded by a major RA, and comprised seven Parties. An individual Party generally included the following: one captain RA (Forward Observation Officer); one captain RA (Bombardment Liaison Officer) on board Bombardment Force; one bombardier or lance-bombadier RA (Observation Post Assistant); two Wireless/Telegraph Ratings, plus one Visual Signalman, these last from the Royal Navy.

Stan Buckmaster of No.2 Cdo., 1944, clearly showing the black background of the parachute badge. (S.O.Buckmaster)

By 1944 Nos.1 and 3 Units provided a Troop each specifically for attachment to Airborne/Commando units. C Troop of No.3 Unit, for instance, provided four Airborne and three Commando Parties, which could alternate if required. Extensive training including mountain work, small boat handling and so on, plus parachute training for some elements, indicates that although FOBs were never officially classified as Commandos, they certainly merit inclusion on account of their cross-training and operational experience with both Army and RM Commando units. Both Troops (an as yet unidentified Troop of No.1 Unit and C Tp. No.3 Unit) were attached to 6th Airborne

Right:
Supported by a Churchill of the North Irish Horse, men of No.2 Cdo. in Italy, April 1945, display typical field dress of the period: BD under Denison smocks, with MkII steel helmets, and are still armed with the No.1 Mk.III SMLE and Thompson gun. (S.O.Buckmaster)

Above:
Roy Owen (front right) and three fellow members of 'Roger' RN Commando Beach Party. Both circular and arch-shaped Combined Ops. badges can be seen, worn below white on midnight blue 'RN COMMANDO' titles; and note Roger Party's red lanyard. (R.Owen)

Div., elements serving with 1st and 4th SS Brigades.

RN ranks wore the 'ROYAL NAVY' shoulder title in white on midnight blue, those from the RA the 'ROYAL ARTILLERY' title in red on midnight blue, above the circular Combined Ops. badge on both shoulders. Parachutists wore their wings between shoulder title and CO badge on the right arm. Naval ranks also wore good-conduct and trade badges, positioning and shape as for RN Commando Beach Parties [19].

During initial employment at Dieppe, in North Africa and Sicily the cap-comforter was worn in action, although one party acquired dark blue berets from an Italian naval base, sewing on the letters 'RN' cut from an Italian captally. Later on, when the specialist Airborne/Commando Parties were formed, parachutist RN ranks donned the maroon beret with Parachute Regt. cap badge [20]; for service with Commando units the green beret was worn, without a badge [21]. RA Officers and NCOs wore their own cap badge with either beret.

Communications were provided by the 68 set (an adaptation of the Army 18 set); when equipped with jeeps the 19 or 22 sets could be used. The 68 set was backpacked using conventional webbing which included side-pack, radio satchel with spare battery, and aerial satchel. The captain (FOB) usually carried a .38 revolver, and sometimes a .303 rifle; the bombadier (OPA) a .455 revolver and a Thompson .45 SMG (later a Sten); the telegraphists had .455 revolvers although, when with the Commandos, a Colt .45 might be provided. A few 36 Grenades would also be carried.

30 COMMANDO/ ASSAULT UNIT

A small party was formed in time for the Dieppe operation, intended to land with the RM Commando. The '30 COMMANDO' title was adopted in time for Operation 'Torch' by which time the unit's establishment consisted of three sections: No. 33 Royal Marines, No.34 Army, and No.36 Royal Navy (this latter more or less under direct control of the Navy).

30 Commando (the title changed to 30 Assault Unit in 1944) operated in every theatre bar Yugoslavia — where Tito refused to sanction the unit's deployment — and the Far East, where the end of the war cut short plans for activity. Elements also took part in operations with the Small Scale Raiding Force.

Apart from general training, these sections were specifically trained in various intelligence-gathering duties, e.g. sifting enemy documentation and prisoners; and in handling demolitions — including gaining familiarity with both Allied and Axis explosive ordnance — and numerous other skills. The intention was that the unit should operate with, and sometimes in front of, fighting units in the vanguard of an assault, being capable of independent action if necessary.

33 Section RM had expanded to three rifle Troops — A, B and X — by 1944, many of whom received parachute training;

Paul Hannon's reconstructions show:
(1) Sergeant, No. 9 Cdo., Salonika,1944. *This unit carried out internal security duties in Greece after the German withdrawal. The NCO is dressed as smartly as circumstances will allow, typifying the British soldier's approach to this tedious task. He wears the green beret with this unit's black hackle; KD shirt and shorts; khaki pullover; scrubbed webbing belt and anklets; and 'ammo boots'. Chevrons are worn on the right arm only.*

(2) Lieutenant–Commander, Royal Navy, 30 Assault Unit, Germany, 1945. *Lt. Cmdr. Dalziel-Job served with the naval element of 30 Assault Unit, whose task at the time was to secure the latest developments in German naval technology. 30 AU never received the Denison smock as general issue. He wears battledress with the correct insignia for this unit — see main text; and has chosen to wear despatch rider's boots. He has acquired an American M1A1 carbine as used by parachutists.*

(3) Bren gun No.1, No.2 Cdo., Argenta, Italy, 1945. *The Battle Jerkin, in this case an early pattern, was still very popular with the Bren groups of No.2 Commando. Note that this man has chosen to ignore the jerkin's special holster attachment loop and wears a separate pistol belt — originally scrubbed white but allowed to become grubby for field use. He has obtained South African issue dark brown leather boots. The steel helmet was worn at all times when in action by No.2 Cdo.; and the Denison was normal wear throughout 2nd Cdo. Bde. at this time.*

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ROYAL NAVY
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X Tp. was both parachute- and glider-trained by early 1945. At that time the unit's establishment included Staghound armoured cars among a considerable compliment of vehicles. Some naval officers were attached for operations in Germany, presumably from 36 Section.

34 Section operated largely in Italy, seeing out the end of the war in that theatre — its complement did not rise beyond 30 all ranks.

In Tunisia 33 Section wore battledress with 'ROYAL MARINES' shoulder title in red on dark blue on both shoulders; they also wore khaki FS cap or khaki peaked SD cap with RM cap badge [22]. By the time of Operation 'Overlord', however, the green beret plus cap badge had been adopted. Beneath the shoulder title was a small square with the number '30' in pale blue on dark blue, worn on both shoulders. Parachutists wore the wings between the shoulder title and the '30' on the right arm. Not all naval ranks were trained Commando soldiers; these wore the naval cap, although all wore the white-on-midnight blue/black 'ROYAL NAVY' shoulder title. Commando-trained naval ranks wore the green beret with naval cap insignia [23]. It is not known which insignia, if any, were worn by 34 (Army) Section[24].

The author is unaware of any significant differences in weaponry, although some individuals used American weapons. MI

Above:
C Troop, No.3 Unit COBU shortly after returning from Normandy. Among this group can be seen RN and RA ranks of both Commando and Airborne Parties; see text for details of battledress insignia and headgear. In the back row, left, naval W/T ratings in No.1 Dress can be seen to wear parachute wings prominently on the right forearm of the naval jumper. (A.A.Parr)

Right:
Part of a group photograph of B Troop, 33 RM Section, 30 Assault Unit, January 1945. These insignia were definitely worn in France and Germany. Two of the group (front left, and man behind his left shoulder) are parachutists, the wings badge being just visible between the red on blue 'ROYAL MARINES' title and the pale on dark blue '30' patch on their right sleeve. (Royal Marines Museum)

Notes:
(1) When Commanding Officer of No.3 Cdo., Peter Young virtually doubled the complement of Bren LMGs available.
(2) Photograph in *Commando*, Durnford-Slater.
(3) Photographs in *Inside the Commandos*, James Ladd; *Commando Crusade*, Maj.Gen.T. Churchill.
(4) *Storm from the Sea*, Peter Young.
(5) At this time officers in 41 RM Cdo. wore a gold wire 'globe & laurel' cap badge without crown on the green beret.
(6) A Tp. and some members of P Troop. See 'The British 1942 Battle Jerkin' by Ian Sadler, 'MI' No.27.
(7) *Marine Commando*, R. Mitchell.
(8) At least one of these per section.
(9) Attachment of Belgian and Polish Troops of No.10 IA Cdo. covered in first part of this article.
(10) An excellent photo of a member of the Raiding Support Regiment wearing this shirt can be seen in *British Commandos in Action*, an interesting item being the SAS/SBS-type parachute insignia worn on the right arm by this unit.
(11) Confirmed on operations in Albania; S.Buckmaster of 5 Tp., No.2 Cdo. distinctly remembers a German officer captured by his section tapping the title of one individual soldier and saying: 'I suppose this is one of your famous Commando raids . . . '.
(12) Letter to author, Maj.J. C. Beadle, MC.
(13) Insignia also worn on battledress to 'show the flag'.
(14) The No.1 carried nine magazines plus the spare parts wallet; the No.2 and 3 carried eight apiece.
(15) J.Quarrie, BEM, had a high opinion of the military capabilities of the American Ranger Units.
(16) These weapons were retained by No.1 Cdo. from Tunis, and were considered a godsend at Kangaw (letter to author, Lt.Col.Trevor, DSO).
(17) Extract from letter, Ray Owen, formerly 'R' Party.
(18) Photograph, *Inside the Commandos*, shows an RN officer wearing his naval cap in Normandy; 'RN COMMANDO' titles can clearly be seen.
(19) In barrack BD a lanyard made of white or camouflaged para-cord was worn by some individuals.
(20) The cloth wings were sometimes used as a cap badge on the maroon beret.
(21) A.Parr, although a member of an Airborne Party, was attached to No.6 Cdo. in Normandy; his maroon beret was replaced by a green one with no cap-badge — insignia remained the same.
(22) Photographs in *The Commandos 1940-46*, Charles Messenger
(23) Members of this unit wore the AFV crewman's combination in Germany in 1945.
(24) Photograph in *Commandos and Rangers of WWII*, by James Ladd, apparently shows members of 34 Section in Italy (simply identified as from 30 Cdo.). One man wears a shoulder title on his KD jacket; it is not possible to identify it, but the brigade 'COMMANDO' title would be most likely.

The Modified 1910 Tunic of Ersatz-Reservist Leonhard Steiger

JOHN A. HALL &
ANNETTE L. E. STEIGERWALD

This article is an account of the research successfully carried out by the authors into the one-time wearer of a German infantryman's tunic of the First World War. The tunic itself is a most interesting collector's item; to have traced its wearer to his home village is a remarkable achievement.

THE TUNIC

In 1914 most Prussian line infantrymen went to war wearing a field tunic of the 1910 pattern, made from good quality heavy wool in field-grey, with red piping, a turned-down collar, eight nickel crown buttons down the front, scalloped rear skirt-flaps, and Brandenburg cuffs. This basic uniform was subject to a number of traditional variations for specific regiments and States. In 1915 a much simplified field service tunic was introduced, though it never completely replaced the already issued 1910 pattern. Referred to as the *Bluse*, the 1915 style tunic had large turned-back cuffs, a fly front, a plain rear skirt, and was frequently of inferior manufacture.

Between 1915 and 1918 a number of variations of basic tunic were manufactured which incorporated aspects of both the 1910 and 1915 styles. The most common variant, sometimes incorrectly referred to as an M1914 *Feldrock*, has a 1910-style button front with 1915-style cuffs and skirt. Another documented variation mixed a 1915 fly front with 1910 cuffs. In addition some 1910 tunics, after heavy use in the trenches, were repaired and reissued with the much simpler 1915-style features. By 1917 the Allied blockade, combined with the enormous demands of a fully mobilised army of six million men, had produced extreme shortages of many basic commodities in Germany, including wool cloth. The quality of uniform deteriorated, with some cloth being woven from old reconstituted clothing and even, experimentally, from paper.

The German army was also reduced to reissuing not just the equipment of casualties — as all combatant countries did — but also the repaired uniforms of wounded men, a practice which was uncommon in either the British or French armies. Trousers and tunics were collected from first aid posts and casualty clearing stations, and were washed, patched, and reissued. The tunic of Leonhard Steiger is one of the only documented examples of this practice, and as such represents a scarce and significant historical item.

Steiger's tunic was a standard 1910 pattern which in the course of the war was partially converted to a 1915 *Bluse* style, with the addition of large turned back cuffs made from inferior coarse wool, and simplified skirt vent. The tunic shows evidence of heavy use, with two patches on the back, plus a replaced collar in poor-quality wool. The shoulder straps have the regimental cypher worn by men of both the regular 116th Infantry Regiment and the 16th Reserve Infantry Regiment. It should be noted that contemporary photographs suggest that not all Reserve regiments adopted — or were permitted to adopt — the cypher of their parent regiment, and instead used numbers on their shoulder straps. It is possible that the 116th Reserve Regiment was unusual in this regard.

The tunic is identified to two owners: written inside the lining in dark ink is 'M. Post' (Musketeer Post), and more faintly 'R. Steiger' (Reservist Steiger). Ersatz-Reservist Leonhard Steiger of the 116th Reserve Infantry Regiment was killed in action near Fort Malmaison on the Chemin des Dames on 6 June 1917. The tunic shows signs of damage suggesting a wound in the back around the left kidney, with a patch on the outside and repair of a small hole in the lining, commensurate with a bullet or shrapnel ball rather than wear and tear.

It is unlikely that Steiger was killed outright, as he would probably have been buried on the spot, with only his equipment removed. Equally, had he survived long enough to be sent to a base hospital he would have been recorded as 'died of wounds' rather than 'killed in action'. Most likely, then, he was mortally wounded and died on route to, or in, either a battlefield casualty clearing station, or one of the mobile base hospitals located just behind the lines, where surgical teams carried out emergency operations on those too severely wounded to survive the journey to a base hospital. The tunic was apparently washed — though faint blood stains are still visible in the lining — patched, and issued to Musketeer Post of the same regiment, who is not listed as having been either wounded or killed in the remaining 18 months of the war.

Ink-stamped on the lining is 'BAXVIII/1915', indicating the *Bekleidungsamt*, or clothing office, of the 18th Army Corps, headquartered in Frankfurt a.Main, and including regiments in Frankfurt, Wiesbaden/Homburg, Mainz, Darmstadt, Giesen, Worms, and the Offenbach/Butzbach/Friedberg (Hesse) area. The 116th Reserve Infantry Regiment had its headquarters in Darmstadt, and would therefore have received its uniforms, at least early in the war, from the *Bekleidungsamt* of the 18th Army Corps.

THE REGIMENT

The Grossherzoglich Hessisches Reserve Infanterie Regiment Nr.116 was mobilized in Darmstadt at the outbreak of war, 1-9 August 1914. Reserve regiments were activated by the call-up of men who had served their two-year period of conscription in the regular army at age 20-21, and who had been transferred to the Reserve, where they remained until aged 30. Such regiments were considered front-line units in wartime. Reserve regiments were intended to duplicate specific line regiments; in practice, however, they took reservists from a number of the regiments within their Army Corps. In 1914 there were 113 Reserve compared with 218 regular infantry regiments.

The 116th Reserve Regiment, while bearing the same number and cypher as the regular Infanterie-Regiment Kaiser Wilhelm (2. Grossherzoglich Hessisches) Nr.116 from Giesen, was made up of men who had served their period of conscription in three different regiments. The 2nd Battalion consisted of reservists from the regular 116th; the 1st Battalion and Machine Gun Company were made up from men who had served in the Leibgarde Infanterie-Regiment Nr.115 (1st Grossherzoglich Hessisches) from Darmstadt; the 3rd Battalion consisted of reservists from the Infanterie-Regiment Nr.168 (5th Grossherzoglich Hessisches) from Friedberg (Hesse).

The fighting strength of the 116th Reserve Regiment was augmented by the permanent addition of the 3rd Bn. of the Königlich Preussisches Landwehr Infanterie Regiment Nr.85. Though it retained its own identity, the Landwehr unit became in

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Captions to colour photographs from author's collection: **(1)** *Front of Steiger's tunic, showing modified cuffs and replacement collar in poor-quality wool of a darker grey shade.*
(2) *Close-up of collar and shoulder straps, the latter bearing the red-stitched cypher of the 116th Infantry Regt. and 116th Reserve Infantry Regt., and the white piping worn by all infantry from 1915.*
(3) *Close-up of interior, showing lining in two shades of light drab material. Note the names of 'M[usketeer] Post' and [Ersatz] 'R[eservist] Steiger'. There are two ink stamps from the* Bekleidungsamt *of the XVIII Army Corps, one dating from the first issue of the tunic, and the second — dated 1915 — from the occasion when the original 1910 tunic was extensively modified in that year.*
(4) *Rear of the tunic, showing modified rear skirts, and patch over left kidney.*
(5) *Close-up of rear patch and modification.*

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effect a fourth battalion for the 116th, and was under the direct command of the senior officers of the regiment.

The 116th Reserve Regiment went into battle for the first time on 22 August 1914, encountering French colonial troops near Neufchateau. 'In the evening,' noted the regimental history, 'almost everybody had the proud feeling of having beaten the French for the first time.' Casualties that day amounted to one killed and seven wounded.

This complacency was soon shattered in a series of bloody engagements on the Maas, the Marne, in the Champagne, at Lille, and Ypres. On 27 November 1914 the shattered regiment was pulled from the line and made up to strength with replacements sent from the 18th Army Corps depots, including that in Darmstadt. This draft was made up largely of second-line reservists, and it is most likely that it was at this time that Ersatz-Reservist Leonhard Steiger joined the regiment.

Prior to the war not all men eligible for national service were actually called up. Those who could prove serious domestic problems such as financial hardship or dependent parents, and those with minor physical ailments, were transferred into the Ersatz (meaning supplementary, not inferior) Reserve. Men would remain in the Ersatz Reserve until age 30, would not have to serve the two years with the standing army, and would be excused from almost all of the annual training periods associated with the normal Reserve. In the event of a war, however, the estimated one million Ersatz–Reservists were eligible for immediate call-up. Many of them, like Leonhard Steiger, were sent to join their local regiment in the field as replacements for the casualties sustained during the opening campaign of 1914.

Front and rear views of a 1910 pattern field service tunic, belonging to a Gefreiter *of the 3rd Co., Infanterie- Regiment Hamburg (2. Hanseatisches) Nr.76, part of the IX Army Corps headquartered in Altona. Note red-piped Brandenburg cuffs and scalloped rear skirt flaps, closed collar and front closure. The decorative button each side of the collar marks the rank. The shoulder straps are piped white - the IX Corps was one of six to wear this colour in 1914 — and bear the regimental number in red. The shoulder strap buttons bear the company number. (Wehrgeschichtliches Museum, Rastatt, Inv.Nr.108 932)*

In December 1914 the rejuvenated 116th Reserve Regiment was transferred to the Eastern Front, where it fought in Poland and Russia. In 1915 it was sent to the Balkans, and in March 1916 found itself fighting on the Macedonian-Greek border. In May 1916 the 116th was transferred back to the Western Front, where it remained for the rest of the war. It was involved in the battles in the Champagne, on the Somme, at St. Quentin, and on the Marne, as well as serving twice at Verdun in 1916 and 1917.

In the course of the war the 116th Reserve Regiment suffered 88 officers, 274 NCOs, and 2,578 enlisted men killed in action; no figures have survived for the number wounded. Between August 1914 and November 1918 a total of 357 officers and 18,996 NCOs and men served in the regiment, but at no time did the 116th have more than 800 men in the field. 24.6% of all the officers who served in the regiment were killed, compared with 15.0% of all NCOs and men.

OPERATION 'SONNENWENDE'

On 23/24 May 1917 the 116th Reserve Regiment was moved from Verdun to an area of the front which had become almost as infamous in the preceding month: the Chemin des Dames. The well-fortified German positions running along this high ridge on the River Aisne had been the focus of a series of massive French assaults in April 1917, part of the ill-fated Nivelle Offensive. A product of Gen. Robert Nivelle's commitment to 'la guerre à l'outrance' (war to

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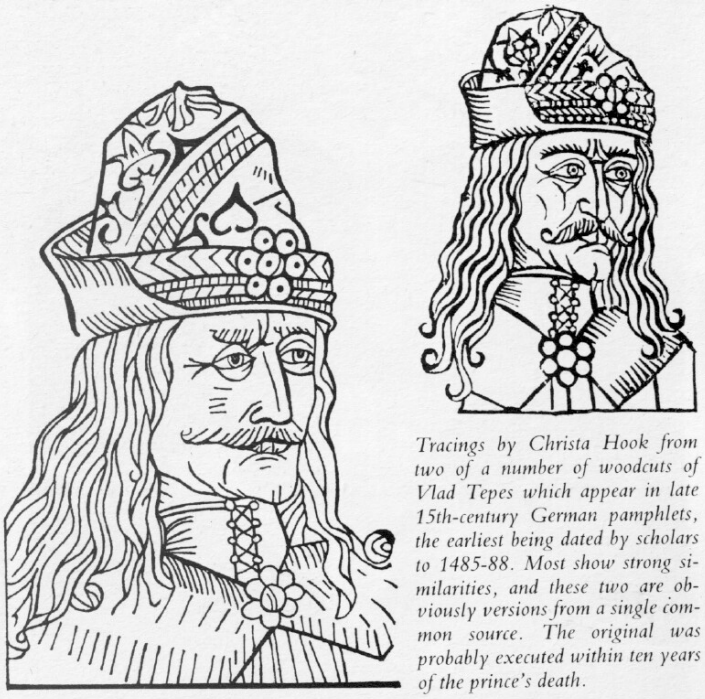
'Dracula' and his Contemporaries: 15th Century Balkan War Leaders (1)

Dr. DAVID NICOLLE and
MARTIN WINDROW
Paintings by ANGUS McBRIDE

Bram Stoker's 19th-century fantasy wove together the traditional vampire myths of the Balkans with folk-memories of a historical figure as colourful, and at least as terrifying as his fictional Count. The grotesque cruelties practised by Vlad IV Tepes, 'the Impaler', Prince of Wallachia in the late 15th century, earned him notoriety even in his own barbaric times. But he was also respected as an energetic defender of his country against the Ottoman Turks; and he and his contemporary rulers and war leaders in that disputed and shadowy region make interesting subjects for reconstruction, as representatives of a colourful transitional period of warfare in the borderlands between Christendom and the Orient.



Tracings by Christa Hook from two of a number of woodcuts of Vlad Tepes which appear in late 15th-century German pamphlets, the earliest being dated by scholars to 1485-88. Most show strong similarities, and these two are obviously versions from a single common source. The original was probably executed within ten years of the prince's death.

Today, Romanian authorities are inclined to lay emphasis on Vlad's patriotic exertions, and to argue that his atrocities should be seen against the background of contemporary mores. He was certainly the founder of Bucharest as a fortress guarding the flatlands north of the Danube against the advancing Ottoman Turks, adopting a more 'forward defence' policy than his predecessors. His campaign of 1462 certainly inflicted heavy losses, and something of a shock, on the armies of Sultan Mahommed II 'the Conqueror'. Mass murder and nightmare tortures were certainly common 15th-century methods of impressing an enemy, actual or potential, by exemplary terror.

Nevertheless, Vlad's apologists do seem to protest too much in their attempts to draw a picture of a stern but realistic ruler, beset by foes, who perhaps applied what would become known as 'Macchiavellian principles' in a primitive and rather roughhewn manner. Contemporary accounts leave little doubt that he was a gruesome psychopath who exercised a diseased imagination in

Above:
McBride's reconstruction of Vlad's features, c.1470, is based partly upon an eye-witness description, and partly upon two reputed portraits, one of which may originally have been painted from life.

Nicholas Modrussa, papal legate to Buda, met Vlad during his Hungarian captivity, 1462-74. He describes him as 'not very tall, but very stocky and strong', with a bull-neck. He had a 'strong and aquiline nose, swollen nostrils, a thin and reddish face', clean-shaven apart from a moustache.
He apparently had large, staring green eyes, with long dark lashes and strongly arched dark eyebrows; and 'swollen temples'. 'Black curly locks' hung to his shoulders. Modrussa described Vlad as having 'a cold and terrible appearance'.

An oil portrait now at Castle Ambras near Innsbruck in the Austrian Tyrol is believed to be a later copy of a lost original perhaps painted by an unknown hand during his Hungarian captivity. It shows him in his late thirties or early forties; and has a strikingly sinister appearance. Family treasures owned by Vlad's descendant Stephen, who died in a Jesuit seminary at Innsbruck in 1602, were sequestered by the order. One attractive theory has the Jesuits passing the portrait to the Archduke Ferdinand II, owner of nearby Ambras, who is known to have had a morbid habit of collecting paintings of moral degenerates and physical and medical monstrosities.

A similar cap is seen in a painting discovered at the Belvedere Palace, Vienna, in 1970 by a German-Romanian researcher, W.Peters. This is a late 15th-century oil on wood depicting the martyrdom of St.Andrew; a watching figure, later identified as Vlad Tepes, has essentially similar features to the Ambras portrait.

Right:
Angus McBride's full-length reconstruction shows Vlad the Impaler in a speculative but logical costume, perhaps suitable for his brief tenure of the throne in late 1448. It is the costume of a boyar *or nobleman from an area under Ottoman suzerainty, and showing Turkish influence: at this stage of his life Vlad was, after all, returning from long exile in Turkey, at the head of Turkish troops, and holding Turkish rank. Here the most obvious examples of Ottoman influence are Vlad's small turban; the slit false sleeves of his coat; and his curved sword — although this still has the long, slender quillons of a Hungarian sabre. His cruciform mace and tall* pavise*-style shield are also in Balkan or Hungarian rather than Oriental style. The shield decoration can only be guesswork: diagonal red and white bars would not be anachronistic?*

unrestrained and often quite arbitrary orgies of cruelty. By the lowest contemporary estimate he killed during his short reigns some 40,000 men, women and even children, many of them by impalement alive on wooden stakes. Many of his victims were not even prisoners of war or political rivals, but the helpless inhabitants of sacked towns; and many were his own terrorised subjects.

THE SETTING

For most Westerners the historical and military background to Vlad's career is as mysterious as the fictional vampire's castle.

Wallachia is the southernmost of three regions now forming modern Romania, lying between the Carpathian Mountains and the Danube. To the north lay Transylvania, ruled in Vlad's day by Hungary; to the north-east, Moldavia, ruled by Vlad's kinsman and sometime ally Stefan III 'the Great'. Vlad himself was in fact born in Transylvania, at Sighisoara on the northern side of the Southern Carpathians. (Stoker set his tale further north, around Bistrita — where a hotel called *The Golden Crown* still contributes to the takings of Romania's tourist industry.)

The inhabitants of Wallachia, the Vlachs, traced their descent to the Dacians of Roman times. They were an Orthodox Christian people, speaking a sub-Latin tongue, the ancestor of modern Romanian. They had migrated southwards across the Carpathians in the 13th century to escape the feudal domination and Catholic persecution of Hungary, and competition from German settlers in Transylvania. Creating a shadowy principality on the southern slopes of the mountains from about 1290, the Vlachs resisted Hungarian interference while generally accepting Hungarian suzerainty. Throughout this period Western military influence via Hungary seems to have been dominant, although anti-Hungarian alliances with Serbia and Bulgaria must also have had their effect upon Wallachian armies.

This chronically unstable buffer state was threatened during the late 14th and 15th centuries by two regional powers: Hungary to the north-west, and Ottoman Turkey to the south. The rulers of this savage and remote land struggled and intrigued to preserve their independence from both. At times they acknowledged the suzerainty of one, or both. At times they fought, on one side or the other. At all times the Wallachian throne was liable to be shaken by feuds among the restless *boyar* landowning class, feuds in which Hungary and Turkey meddled by supporting their own candidates for power.

The menace of Ottoman Turkey was first felt late in the 14th century, when Vlachs apparently fought alongside the Serbs in the disastrous First Battle of Kosovo in 1389. By 1391 Prince Mircea 'the Old' of Wallachia was paying tribute to the sultan. In 1396, stirred by the fall of Bulgaria to the Turks three years before, the Vlachs took up arms again as part of a multi-national crusader army, which was virtually annihilated at Nikopol. Even so, though forced to recognise Turkish suzerainty, Mircea managed to negotiate Wallachia's continued and unoccupied rule by its Christian princes.

Vlad, the future 'Dracula', was born in about 1430 at Sighisoara, where his father, Vlad Dracul, held a border commander's post under the Hungarian crown, and where he was being groomed as Hungary's candidate in exile for the Wallachian throne. (Hereafter, for clarity, we shall call Vlad IV 'the Impaler' throughout.[1] In 1436, with Hungarian and Moldavian co-operation, Vlad II Dracul fought his way to that throne at the head of a dissident faction of boyars.

The Impaler was brought up in his father's palace at Tirgoviste with several brothers, including one Radu the Handsome; but at the age of perhaps 13 years he was to begin a nomadic and terrifying adolescence, which cannot have failed to harden and to darken his character.

Among the late 15th century paintings on the outside of the monastery church of Voronets are groups representing 'saved' and 'damned' souls. Among the condemned are Muslim Turks, Tartars, and others apparently in Mamluk costume. There are also Western Catholic Christians, and men wearing Byzantine-style ceremonial robes, probably representing Balkan rulers whom the monks of Voronets believed had compromised with the invading Ottomans.

INTO EXILE

Sensing a shift in regional power, Vlad II Dracul began to align himself with Sultan Murad II; and in 1437 he led Wallachian troops alongside a Turkish army on a campaign into Transylvania. In 1444 he was forced to send the Impaler and Radu to Turkey as hostages for his good behaviour; and for four years the boys led a precarious existence in the fortress of Egrigoz.

In 1447 Vlad II and his eldest son Mircea were killed (the latter by burial alive) by dissident boyars aided by the Hungarian general Janos Hunyadi; and a candidate more pliable to Hungarian demands was enthroned as Vladislav II. The Impaler was freed by the sultan; given

[1]Some sources give the style 'Vlad III'; here we follow the majority, however. Wallachian princes tended to rule briefly, and often on more than one occasion, which complicates the sequences.

The question of the name has been argued at length. *Drac* is the Romanian for 'devil'; the suffix *-ul* is the definite article: thus Vlad II 'the Devil'. The suffix *-ulea* translates as 'son of'; thus Vlad IV 'Son of the Devil'. He was also known in his lifetime as *Tepes*, 'the Impaler'; but surviving documents prove that he used the style 'Draculea' himself.

Some scholars, including Florescu & McNally, tend to the view that the epithet may be traced to *draco* Latin for 'dragon', Dracula's father being a proud member of the Hungarian Order of the Dragon. (The Romanian for 'dragon' is *balaur*, so this explanation rests on the use of Latin.) Whether known in his lifetime as 'Son of the Devil' or 'Son of the Dragon', Vlad IV clearly enjoyed a sinister distinction among contemporary rulers.

Turkish officer's rank, and Turkish troops; and allowed to sweep over Wallachia's southern border, capturing Tirgoviste in October 1448 while Vladislav II was absent on campaign. However, he only managed to hold the capital for two months before being driven into exile once more.

The next eight years saw the Impaler living by his wits in Turkey, Moldavia and Transylvania, sometimes as a tolerated pawn in the power game, sometimes as a fugitive. He seems to have cemented a close friendship with Stefan, heir to Moldavia, and to have fought with him against the Poles. He was in Moldavia when Christendom reeled to the news of the fall of Constantinople to the Turks on 29 May 1453. Finally taken up by Hunyadi as a useful alternative to Vladislav II, who was slipping from Hungarian favour, the Impaler fought his way on to the bloodstained throne of Wallachia as Vlad IV in September 1456. He took formal oaths to both the king of Hungary and the sultan of Turkey; and began his first reign.

REIGN OF TERROR, 1456–60

We may briefly, and rather dimly reconstruct the flavour of the Impaler's domestic rule from European and Turkish written sources, and from analyses of folk traditions carried out by Romanian scholars.

He quickly sought revenge for his father's and brother's deaths, and consolidated his grip over the boyar class, by mass murder, his chosen method being impalement alive (perhaps learned from the Turks, who also favoured this appalling means of execution).

Traditionally, he opened his campaign at Easter festivities when he had hundreds of members of noble families dragged from the feast-tables to which he had treacherously invited them, and impaled on the spot. The younger victims were marched off to be used as slave labour rebuilding his castle near Poenari, at Curtea de Arges.

By a continuing programme of selective atrocity and massacre the young prince almost wiped out the boyar class, replacing them with his own men. He cowed the Church in the same manner, not scrupling to impale priests and monks. By the same barbaric methods he suppressed civil crime. Not only criminals, but beggars, vagabonds, indeed any poor wretch upon whom the prince's baleful eye fell — for the most insanely arbitrary of reasons — suffered unspeakable deaths by stake, steel or fire. The towns and main roads were planted with hideous thickets of stakes, each bearing a pitiful burden left exposed to the crows and the weather.

It is sometimes argued that a policy of revenge and preemptive terror was a rational, if ruthless, response to the chronic disloyalty of the boyars; but contemporary accounts of his personal delight in the details of these horrors hint strongly that Vlad was in the grip of some severe psycho-sexual disorder.

The dark prince's scope for atrocity widened with the outbreak of a trade dispute with German merchant communities in the area of Transylvania around Brasov and Sibiu, and with a subsequent campaign to punish supposed disloyalty in the border duchies of Amlas and Fagaras. Between 1457 and 1460 he led many raids into these regions, burning everything in his path and impaling the inhabitants in huge numbers. Modern historians, more conservative than his contemporaries, estimate the number of his victims at between 20,000 and 30,000.

THE DANUBE CAMPAIGN

The Impaler was determined to free his country from the Turkish threat; and during the late 1450s he had Bucharest fortified as a strong-point and a princely residence. After the first three years of his reign he ceased to comply with the terms of his Turkish vassalage. Turkish ambassadors had their turbans nailed to their heads; border incidents proliferated; Turkish demands for recruiting rights for the Janissary corps within Wallachia were refused; and a Turkish attempt to lure the prince into an ambush failed. In winter 1461–62 open hostilities broke out when the Impaler led a major offensive along the Danube.

His aims seem to have been to liberate Turkish-occupied territory in Bulgaria; to destroy enemy port facilities and

This armour of c.1480-1500 was made in Germany; it is of a type used by many mercenary soldiers in eastern and central Europe. Such armours also appear in wall-paintings, on tombs, and in other examples of art from the Romanian provinces of Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania. (National Museum, Budapest)

stores along the Danube, hampering any planned Turkish counteroffensive across the great river; and to encourage other Christian powers, notably Hungary and Moldavia, to join him in a major crusade. His success in his first two objectives counted for little in view of his failure to achieve the third.

The prince's correspondence with King Matthias of Hungary lists many Turkish-held towns taken or burnt, including Oblucitza, Novoselo, Dirstor, Cirtal, Orsova, Rahova, Samovit, Ghighen, Nikopol and Giurgiu. His army drove into Bulgaria, and were hailed as liberators as they swept along the Danube to the Black Sea coast. He reported a 'body count' of some 24,000 Turkish heads; and many thousands of prisoners were dragged back to be impaled near Tirgoviste. It is said that some Turkish commanders were so shaken that they argued for withdrawal from the Balkans completely.

The Impaler's victories were hailed all over Christendom; on the island of Rhodes the English pilgrim William of Wey attended celebration masses. But the Prince of Wallachia's appeals for support, as he waited for the inevitable Turkish counterstroke, fell on deaf ears. (Indeed, Stefan of Moldavia chose this moment to attack Wallachian border fortresses.

In April 1462 Mohammed the Conqueror led from Constantinople an army estimated at about 60,000; he also brought the Impaler's brother Radu, now a tool in the sultan's hand, to act as a rallying point for any boyars who could be persuaded to defect. Sailing up the Danube and linking up with an overland column from Bulgaria, the Turks landed in early June — at the second attempt, and in the face of fierce resistance — at some unknown point on the Wallachian shore.

The Impaler is thought to have had some 30,000 men under arms, most of them peasant levies; but several thousand were diverted to the Moldavian border. Unable to face the huge Turkish army in open battle, the Vlachs fell back. They laid their own countryside waste as they withdrew, and harassed the Turks in hit-and-run attacks. By mid-June the Turks were before Tirgoviste.

On 17 June the Impaler carried out a major night attack on the sultan's entrenched camp with some 7,000 men — an act of extraordinary temerity, which deeply impressed Turkish witnesses. He failed to reach and kill the sultan, but caused very heavy casualties before being driven out with heavy losses himself. He is supposed to have had impaled any of his own men found to have been wounded in the back after this action.

One account describes the almost superstitious shock felt by the Turks, from the sultan down, on entering a defile near Tirgoviste to find some 20,000 impaled corpses lining the track. While taking the prince very seriously, however, the Turks continued to advance. Finally, deserted by boyars who aligned themselves with Radu, the Impaler fled almost alone over the mountains into Transylvania. He was placed in custody; and spent the next 12 years imprisoned near Buda. Meanwhile, Radu governed Wallachia for the Turkish sultan.

THE LAST CAMPAIGN

In time Radu was defeated by Stefan of Moldavia (1473); and Vlad, who accepted conversion to Catholicism, once more appeared a useful tool of Hungarian policy. He was given a border command the following year; and in November 1476, with an army of Hungarians, Moldavians, Transylvanians, Serbs, and some Wallachian boyars, he regained his throne. Fighting continued, however, both Turks and Orthodox boyars having good reasons for hating him. Within two months at most the bulk of Hungarian and Moldavian troops had withdrawn; left alone with an uncertain power base, Vlad the Impaler was defeated and killed somewhere near Bucharest in December 1476 or January 1477.

Whether a Turk or a Vlach cut him down is not known for certain. Nor is his resting-place: tradition holds that his head was sent to Constantinople, and his headless body buried secretly at Snagov monastery — where an unmarked but apparently royal grave, containing bones too decayed even for the absence of a skull to be confirmed, was opened in 1931. With the Impaler's death resistance to the Turks crumbled; even so, Wallachia did not come under direct Turkish rule, but generally remained a semi-autonomous province of the Ottoman Empire for the next 400 years. MI

Sources:
The major English-language sources are *In Search of Dracula*, and *Dracula: A Biography*, both by Radu Florescu and Raymond T. McNally, the latter published in England in 1974 by Robert Hale. This contains a very full bibliography of primary and secondary sources in several languages, and some interesting illustrations.

To be continued: *Part 2 describes and illustrates the Impaler's two great contemporaries, Stefan III the Great of Moldavia, and King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary; and discusses the nature and equipment of Balkan armies of the period.*

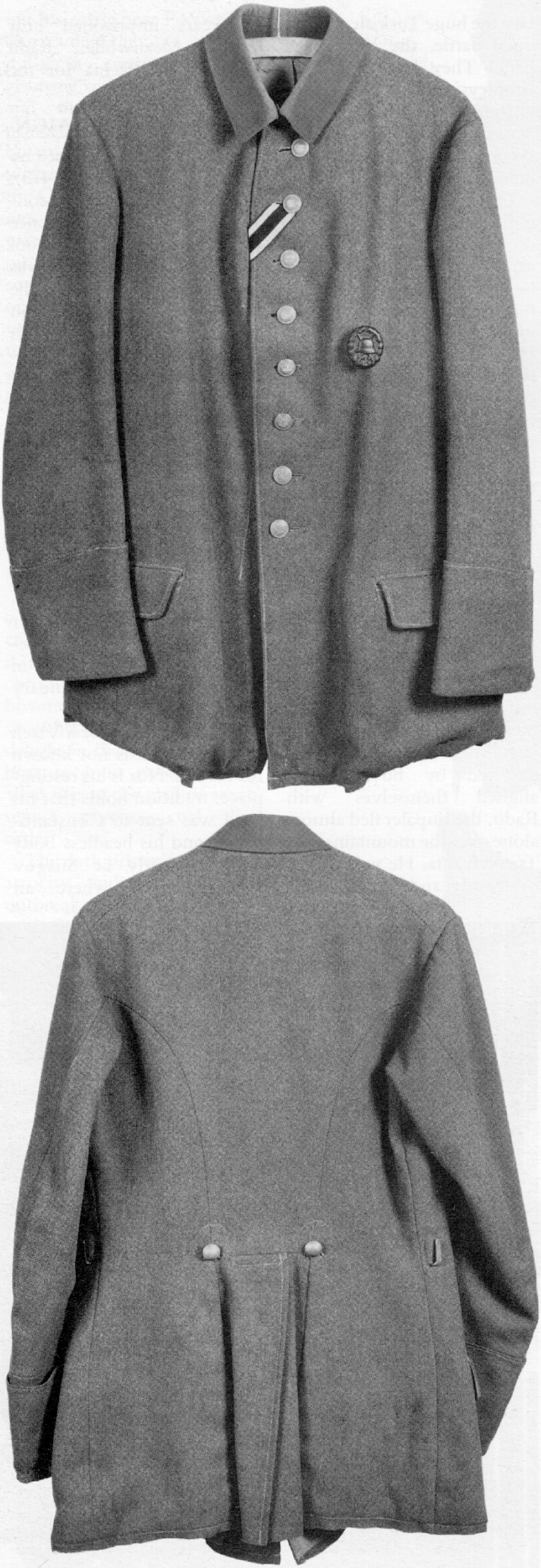
The various martyrdom scenes painted on the church at Voronets show saints being butchered by men in Turkish or other Islamic dress, but some of the executioners also appear to be clothed in eastern European style.

'TUNIC' continued from p.28

the bitter end), the initial attacks had been bloodily repulsed with only negligible gains. Refusing to accept the obvious failure, Nivelle repeatedly committed his men to the assault. Following the horror of Verdun, the futile slaughter of the Chemin des Dames destroyed the *poilus'* faith in their high command; and between the end of April and October 1917 mutinies broke out in 68 of France's 112 divisions. On 15 May, Nivelle was replaced by Petain, who set about restoring morale by halting all but the most essential assaults.

The 116th Reserve Infantry Regiment moved into position in and around the ruins of Fort Malmaison on the night of 26/27 May, relieving elements of the 53rd and 394th Regiments. The fort, with its bomb-proof tunnels, held a key position at the very end of the Chemin des Dames, dominating the road from Laon to Soissons, and providing an outstanding view down both sides of the ridge, ideal for artillery observation. The fort had been the scene of some of the most bitter fighting in April, and some deserters from the 65th Chasseurs indicated that yet another French attack was imminent.

In April the French had secured trenches at the top of the ridge just south-east of Fort Malmaison, and the German commanders concluded that the new attack would probably be launched from that area. The regiment holding the line to the immediate left of the 116th, the Thüringisches Infanterie-



A 1910/1915 transition tunic, belonging to a private of Infanterie-Regiment Prinz Friedrich der Niederlande (2. Westfälisches) Nr.15, from Minden, part of the VII Corps headquartered in Munster. Manufactured in 1915, this is an example of the most common type of variant style tunic, with 1910-style buttoned front, though unpiped and here with aluminium rather than brass buttons; and 1915-style turned back cuffs. The green collar is more typical of the 1915 pattern Bluse. *(Wehrgeschichtliches Museum, Rastatt, Inv.Nr.107 476)*

Regiment Nr.32 from Meiningen, was given the task of driving the French from these trenches, which threatened the fort. The German attack, code-named 'Sonnenwende' (Solstice), was to take place after a fierce but brief artillery barrage at 5.00 a.m. on 6 June 1917. Men of the 116th were not directly involved in 'Sonnenwende' though they were responsible for providing covering fire and support. Steiger's company — Number 1 — was detailed to remain 'on alert' behind the front line south-east of the fort.

Operation 'Sonnenwende' was a complete success: the French trenches were stormed, and over 400 prisoners of the 112th Infantry Regiment were taken as well as five machine guns. In the evening a counter-attack was repulsed, and French plans to attack the fort were abandoned. The 116th, on the periphery of the fighting, had seven men killed that day. One of them was Leonhard Steiger.

LEONHARD STEIGER

Tracing the personal history of an enlisted man in the German army in the First World War appears at first sight to be a hopeless task. Imperial German military records, including all records of enlistment and service located in archives in Potsdam, Berlin and Darmstadt, were almost entirely obliterated during the bombing in the Second World War. However, patience, extensive and time-consuming research, and above all a generous helping of luck, can sometimes provide at least a glimpse of an individual. Our six-month search for details about Leonhard Steiger may provide a case study of use to others contemplating a similar undertaking.

It is frequently possible to track an officer through one of the innumerable regimental histories published during the 1920s, of which the Imperial War Museum in London has an extensive collection. These books, however, rarely mention

Interior of the Steiger tunic; note that the back and the two front panels are lined in different shades of cloth - see colour photograph.

individual enlisted men; this is understandable when it is considered that in the course of the war many regiments received in excess of 19,000 replacements. Nevertheless, a handful of the published regimental histories do list those men who were either killed, wounded, or awarded an Iron Cross or other decoration. This is how we found Leonhard Steiger, as he is amongst those listed as killed in action recorded in an appendix to the regimental history of the 116th Reserve Regiment published in 1929. This list gave not just the date, but also the place of death, while in the main text of the regimental history we found details of Operation 'Sonnenwende'.

We next contacted the German military cemetery officials: Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge e.V., Bundesgeschafts Stelle, Werner-Hilpert-Str.2 Postfach 103840, 3500 Kassel, West Germany. They were, however, unable to locate a marked grave for Leonhard Steiger. This is not uncommon, as an even higher proportion of Germans than Allies lie in unmarked graves. In the bitter atmosphere following the Armistice, while many of the Allied cemeteries were carefully recorded and made permanent, German authorities were initially denied permission to supervise or tend German graves. In many cases returning farmers obliterated small German cemeteries, while French and Belgian authorities frequently collected the remains together for mass burial. Inevitably the identity of many of these men was lost. It is likely that the remains of Leonhard Steiger lie in the cemetery closest to Fort Malmaison, at Ceony, where 3,122 unidentified Germans are buried in a single mass grave.

The search for further personal details now became more difficult, and necessitated a research trip to Germany to consult the Preussische Verlustlisten — the casualty lists published by German authorities daily or weekly during the war. For reasons of security these lists did not mention either the regiment of the casualty or the place of death. To enable friends and relatives to confirm an identity, however, the man's place and date of birth were listed. It was this information that we were looking for.

The Wehrgeschichtliches Museum in Rastatt (one of

Men of Steiger's regiment, the Grossherzoglich Hessisches Reserve Infanterie-Regiment Nr.116, behind the lines somewhere in France, c.1917. While most wear 1910 pattern tunics, the man at extreme right wears a modified tunic identical to Steiger's. The age and build appear about right; the odds against it being Steiger are hundreds to one; but who knows? (Wehrgeschichtliches Museum,

the finest military museums in Germany, and well worth a visit in its own right) has in its collection the complete multi-volume casualty lists for the 1914-18 war. The museum staff at Rastatt was enormously helpful, showed a genuine interest in our research, and gave us access to the original documents.

After a time-consuming search through the lists published in the weeks after 6 June 1917, we finally found Leonhard Steiger in the Preussische Verlustlisten of 5 July 1917. Presumably the month's delay between his death and inclusion in the casualty list was a result not only of bureaucracy but of the need to wait until his immediate family had been notified. So here he was: Steiger, Leonhard, born 31 May 1887 in the small village of Habitzheim, between Dieburg and Darmstadt. He had celebrated his thirtieth birthday, therefore, just a few days before he had fallen.

We decided to telephone all the Steigers listed in the Habitzheim and Deiburg telephone directories; but though our enquiries were always met with polite interest, nobody knew of a relative named Leonhard killed in the First World War. Families checked photo albums, and spoke to aged grandparents, but nothing emerged.

We next contacted both the Protestant and Catholic priests in Habitzheim, who tried to out-do each other in their attempts to uncover information on Leonhard Steiger. The Protestant priest was soon able to report that he had found Leonhard's baptism papers. Ersatz-Reservist Steiger suddenly became a real person, not just a statistic.

Leonhard Steiger was the second son born to his Protestant father, Georg, and Catholic mother, Susanne. Georg Steiger was a poor man, a landless *'tagelöhner'* — day labourer — at the very bottom end of German rural society. There is no record of Leonhard Steiger ever marrying, despite being in his late twenties when he went off to war. The fact that he had been transferred to the Ersatz-Reserve, rather than having to serve a period of national service for which he would have been eligible in 1907-8, suggests that his income was necessary to support his parents.

Leonhard Steiger was a poor and insignificant man. His name is even misspelled on the Habitzheim war memorial, and nobody in his village remembers him today. He was not a great hero, he won no medals, he wrote no memorable poems: he was, in fact, typical of the millions of men who died in the war. Yet 70 years later, by a twist of fate, it was Leonhard Steiger who became the specific focus of our research.

We visited the place where he died, just south-east of Fort Malmaison, on a rainy day in the summer of 1989. The top of the ridge there is now an onion field, still thick with unexploded shells, *Granatenwerfer* rounds, metal splinters and shrapnel balls. The view from the ridge is beautiful, out over the River Aisne, down the slope where thousands of men were slaughtered. And on that day we felt particularly close to one young German, a man whom we had never met but knew quite well; and we promised that we would tell his story, as a testament not just to his humanity, but to the humanity of every one of the faceless millions who fell in that war. MI

Suggested reading:
David Nash, *German Infantry 1914-18*: F.J. Stephens and Graham Maddocks, *The Organisation and Uniform of the Imperial German Army, 1900-1918*: *German Army Handbook, April 1918*. intro. David Nash: D.S.V. Fosten, R.J. Marrion, and G.A. Embleton, *The German Army 1914-18*.

Acknowledgements:
The authors would particularly like to thank Oberstleutnant Uwe-Peter Böhm, Sabina Hermes, Matthias Weyrauch, and the staff of the Wehrgeschichtliches Museum in Rastatt for their enormous assistance: Herr K. Fritzsch, Cimetière Militaire Allemand, Fort de Malmaison: Dr. David Valuska; Philip J. Haythornthwaite; Hayes Otoupalik; Herr von Klopmann, German War Graves Commission, Kassell; and the priests of Habitzheim.

The 93rd Highlanders at Balaklava: (1) Army Life in the 1850s

ALLAN CARSWELL

'Obedience is the first duty of a soldier.' So proclaims the opening line of the Articles of War, printed in the account book of every private soldier of the mid-19th century army. They go on to list each separate military offence and the punishment the guilty man would receive: 'Death, transportation or such other punishment as a Court Martial may award'. For the men of the 93rd (Highland) Regiment drawn up in line on a hill outside the Crimean port of Balaklava on the morning of 25 October 1854, duty, discipline and obedience were facts of life of which they did not need reminding by the stark warnings of the Articles of War. What happened in the next few hours would test the 93rd's discipline and obedience to their limit, and would go down in the history of the regiment, the army and of Scotland as 'The Thin Red Line'.

The regiment had been in the Crimea for over a month. In that time they had taken part in one major action against the Russians on the Alma River, and had carried out a rigorous flank march around the allied objective, the port of Sebastopol. They had now established, and were garrisoning, the British base at Balaklava, while the main body of the army moved forward to begin the investment of Sebastopol itself.

The 93rd had been one of the first regiments to sail east, and had spent several months stationed in various places along the Turkish coast while the allied governments vacillated about where and when to attack the Russians. (This is not the place to go into the reasons why Britain, France and Turkey were going to war with Russia; as was made clear to the men of the 93rd, such matters were not their concern.) They had left Britain fit and at full strength after receiving drafts of men from other Highland regiments. This was the regiment's first opportunity for active service since the American War of 1812. The months spent on the Black Sea coast, however, had badly affected their health.

Surgeon Munro's dilemma

A combination of hard physical labour in the building of camps and fortifications, exposure to the elements, and a wholly inadequate diet had weakened the men's resistance both to dysentery and to that scourge of the 19th century army, cholera. The 93rd's Regimental Surgeon, William Munro, who joined them on their arrival in the Crimea, complained bitterly in his memoirs about the conditions his new regiment had endured. It is enlightening to compare his views on what a soldier of the 1850s had to endure with that which is expected of a modern soldier: 'To expect men who had been accustomed to good food and comfortable beds in warm rooms to work hard during the day, and to lie down at night on the bare ground in clothes damp with profuse

A lance-corporal and three privates of the 93rd Highlanders in Guard Order, c.1850; the privates wear white gloves, and all four the 'fly plaid', the triangular flap of which can be made out on the right hip. They carry the 1842 pattern percussion smooth-bore musket. Note the hose garters, and cf. the colour illustrations. This picture is from the photograph album of Gen.Sir John Ewart GCB, *who served as a junior officer with the 93rd in the Crimea. (By kind permission of Sir Hector Munro* MP, *Gen.Ewart's great-grandson.)*

perspiration, and crowded together in bell-tent, was unreasonable[1]".

The men's health was still poor when they arrived in the Crimea, although their morale had improved with the prospect of active service. The regiment was suffering more casualties than any other in the army. To look after this deteriorating situation Munro had three assistants, one 15-man bell-tent as a hospital, ten stretchers and the services of the bandsmen to act as bearers. His rudimentary supplies were contained in two panniers carried by a single regimental transport pony. A surgeon was expected to supply his own set of instruments, which would cost around £25[2]; this expense was regarded as a condition of his promotion to surgeon. This was all that was deemed necessary to treat a battalion of 29 officers and 859 men going on campaign, where casualties from disease and enemy action were a certainty.

These arrangements were severely stretched after the army's first major encounter with the Russians at the Alma. The wounded of some regiments were left in the open for hours, some even overnight, before being treated by their regimental surgeons. They then had to be carried three miles to the coast to be embarked onto the transports for evacuation. No ambulances or transport of any kind were available for this journey, nor were there even spare medical officers or orderlies to accompany them. Even the single regimental hospital tent was missing as the army was marching without a baggage train of any kind. Each man was carrying only three days' rations and 100 rounds of ammunition.

Munro was a man of formidable efficiency and initiative who did the best he could for his men. He had all the regiment's 40 wounded treated, fed, and under cover in a disused farm building by midnight on the day of battle. In this he was hindered by having to wait for the presence of his Brigade Surgeon before carrying out any surgical operations, an extremely frustrating military procedure which was soon scrapped.

Despite the uplifting effect of the victory at the Alma, dysentery, scurvy and cholera continued to thin the ranks of the 93rd. Munro regarded the men's diet as the prime cause for their low resistance to illness. Both officers and men had only salt pork and dry biscuit to eat (the biscuit was suitable only for the best teeth, according to Munro), with no fresh fruit or vegetables. Private William Nairn did his best to live off the land: 'Eight of us went off to a village called Kamara about two miles distant from camp for some chickens we had seen while marching. We found the Cossacks had been there before us and had secured the chickens; but we got rid of the Cossacks and took the chickens and got safely back to camp. The following morning we had to continue our march. Before we marched we had some difficulty about the chickens, but we finally overcame the difficulty by giving two of them to the Colonel and I marched with six on my shoulders[3].'

The regiment had to wait until the base at Balaklava was established before their baggage could be unloaded. For the duration of the flank march around Sebastopol after the Battle of the Alma, the men slept in the open with no change of clothes.

Medical officers like William Munro, who had genuine concern for the welfare of their men and a professional pride in their work, had done much to improve the conditions of the private soldier of the British Army. In the years leading up to the Crimean War much had changed within the army, despite the stifling influence of many Napoleonic-vintage senior officers during the 1840s. Armies are reflections of the societies they spring from, and the factors that shaped Britain in the 19th century also affected the army. The rise of a patriotic and increasingly influential middle class, the awakening of a social conscience for the welfare of the common man and a growing suspicion and distrust of the established order all helped to bring pressure to improve the lot of the common soldier. It is not surprising that it fell to professional men like Munro to campaign for reform, often in the face of indifference, complacency or hostility from among the senior ranks of the army and government. The official view of the army was that it should be kept as small, as inexpensive, and as far from the public eye as possible.

RECRUITING

By modern standards, life in the ranks of the mid-19th century army was not an attractive prospect. Soldiers

were poorly paid, badly fed, and lived in cramped and unhealthy barracks under iron discipline. They had little to occupy their time but a repetitive round of drill parades, inspections and guard duty. In addition there were always the risks of active service, with possible death or mutilation, and the inevitable fact that the greater part of a man's service would be spent abroad, usually in an alien and unhealthy climate. Even to a contemporary eye the life that a soldier led was no great incentive to join up, and the army had a constant struggle to keep most of its regiments up to strength. Those who did take the Queen's shilling usually came from the very bottom rungs of the social ladder: either farm labourers, or unskilled workers from the expanding industrial towns. The army's preference was for men from a rural background, who were generally healthier and freer from any radical ideas than their urban counterparts. The military reformers tried hard to attract a better class of recruit in order to improve the army's image and dispel the popular view of it being little better than a drunken rabble kept in order by the ferocious use of the lash. They argued that if the soldiers' conditions were improved then the elusive better quality recruit would come forward. If they failed to materialise (which they never did in any number), then a better environment would at least help to reshape the unpromising raw material that was available.

For the Highland regiments, and the 93rd in particular, recruitment did not present the same problems. The army in Scotland, and especially in the Highlands, did not carry the same stigma as it did in the rest of Britain. Soldiering was still almost a respectable occupation (an incomprehensible notion elsewhere). When Sir Colin Campbell addressed the Highland Brigade prior to the assault on the heights above the Alma, he threatened any soldier who disgraced the name of his regiment with having his name posted on the door of his local parish church; and to Highlanders this was a serious deterrent. Highland regiments did, however, face increasing difficulties in the first half of the 19th century in maintaining their ethnic identity. Since the late 18th century sweeping changes in the use of the land had resulted in large-scale depopulation of the Highlands. Either by forced eviction or in hope of a better way of life, thousands of people had emigrated to the Lowlands of Scotland, to Canada and to Australia. What had once seemed an inexhaustible reservoir of manpower to the army was drying up, and the Highland regiments were forced to move further south to fill their ranks[4].

The 93rd prided itself on having the highest proportion of native Highlanders in its ranks (620 Highlanders to 271 Lowlanders in 1854). An extra 4d a day was paid to four corporals to translate the English words of command into Gaelic for those whose only language it was: this was reckoned to be over half the regiment. The officers of the regiment felt confident enough about attracting recruits to instruct recruiting parties 'to abstain from those false or highly-coloured representations of the service to young men who may show an inclination to enlist, that are too frequently made[5]'.

If a recruit fell for the blandishments of the recruiting sergeant he would then have to undergo a fairly rigorous medical examination; the rate of those rejected as medically unfit could be as high as 40 per cent. Once again men from a rural background were favoured above the less healthy men from the towns. Highlanders were particularly highly regarded as fine physical specimens; the parade frontage of the 93rd prior to the Crimean War was said to be noticeably wider than that of a standard Line regiment because of the size of the men.

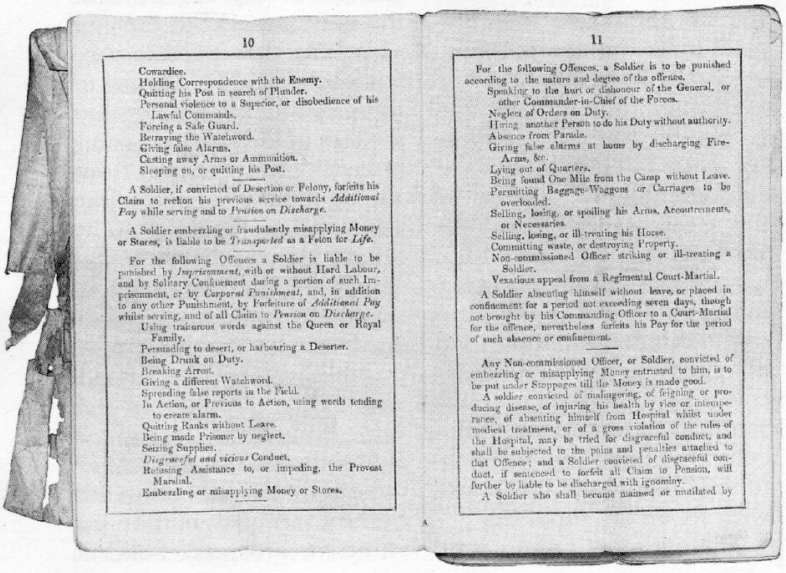
On being passed fit the recruit would then be attested and paid his bounty. In 1854 this was around £4 in an infantry regiment[6]. The recruit would not remain a wealthy man for very long. He was instantly compelled, on joining his regiment (or its Depot Companies if it was overseas), to buy all the various pieces of his uniform and equipment not supplied at the public expense, aptly named 'his necessaries'. The price of these items (shirts, underwear, socks, brushes, towels, etc) usually exceeded the value of his bounty, so a soldier embarked on his new life already in debt.

After 1847 enlistment in the infantry was reduced from an unlimited period (no more than 21 years) to an initial period of no more than ten years, in another attempt to attract better quality recruits. It was also rather cynically, although probably correctly thought that after ten years' service, usually abroad, a man's health would be so broken that his value to the army would be questionable. In fact, after 1847 men usually managed to extend their service after the first ten years, and the standard of recruit did not improve.

Training

The recruit then began instruction in the basics of his new trade. This was undergone with the Depot Companies of his regiment if it was overseas. On being passed fit for duty he would then be sent out in a draft of men to his battalion. The Depot Companies were made up of raw recruits and those old and sick men of the regiment not fit for foreign service. They could also be called upon to act 'in aid of the civil power'; a recruit's training was often interrupted, and completed in a rather less than vigorous atmosphere.

The basis for an infantry soldier's training was drill: the series of precise mechanical movements, refined in the late 18th century and partially updated in 1824 and 1833, necessary to move large bodies of men around a battlefield as quickly and efficiently as possible. Little else was expected of a soldier than he perform these movements with 'precision and celerity'[7]. If a regiment carried out its drill efficiently and calmly in peacetime, when put to the test of battle it stood a good chance of being 'steady', the ultimate accolade bestowed upon a 19th century infantry battalion. Until the army's adoption of the rifled Minié musket in 1851 instruction in



10

Cowardice.
Holding Correspondence with the Enemy.
Quitting his Post in search of Plunder.
Personal violence to a Superior, or disobedience of his Lawful Commands.
Forcing a Safe Guard.
Betraying the Watchword.
Giving false Alarms.
Casting away Arms or Ammunition.
Sleeping on, or quitting his Post.

A Soldier, if convicted of Desertion or Felony, forfeits his Claim to reckon his previous service towards *Additional Pay* while serving and to *Pension* on *Discharge*.

A Soldier embezzling or fraudulently misapplying Money or Stores, is liable to be *Transported* as a Felon for *Life*.

For the following Offences a Soldier is liable to be punished by *Imprisonment*, with or without Hard Labour, and by Solitary Confinement during a portion of such Imprisonment, or by *Corporal Punishment*, and, in addition to any other Punishment, by Forfeiture of *Additional Pay* whilst serving, and of all Claim to *Pension* on *Discharge*.

Using traitorous words against the Queen or Royal Family.
Persuading to desert, or harbouring a Deserter.
Being Drunk on Duty.
Breaking Arrest.
Giving a different Watchword.
Spreading false reports in the Field.
In Action, or Previous to Action, using words tending to create alarm.
Quitting Ranks without Leave.
Being made Prisoner by neglect.
Seizing Supplies.
Disgraceful and vicious Conduct.
Refusing Assistance to, or impeding, the Provost Marshal.
Embezzling or misapplying Money or Stores.

11

For the following Offences, a Soldier is to be punished according to the nature and degree of the offence.

Speaking to the hurt or dishonour of the General, or other Commander-in-Chief of the Forces.
Neglect of Orders on Duty.
Having another Person to do his Duty without authority.
Absence from Parade.
Giving false alarms at home by discharging Fire-Arms, &c.
Lying out of Quarters.
Being found One Mile from the Camp without Leave.
Permitting Baggage-Waggons or Carriages to be overloaded.
Selling, losing, or spoiling his Arms, Accoutrements, or Necessaries.
Selling, losing, or ill-treating his Horse.
Committing waste, or destroying Property.
Non-commissioned Officer striking or ill-treating a Soldier.
Vexatious appeal from a Regimental Court-Martial.

A Soldier absenting himself without leave, or placed in confinement for a period not exceeding seven days, though not brought by his Commanding Officer to a Court-Martial for the offence, nevertheless forfeits his Pay for the period of such absence or confinement.

Any Non-commissioned Officer, or Soldier, convicted of embezzling or misapplying Money entrusted to him, is to be put under Stoppages till the Money is made good.

A soldier convicted of malingering, or feigning or producing disease, or injuring his health by vice or intemperance, or absenting himself from Hospital whilst under medical treatment, or of a gross violation of the rules of the Hospital, may be tried for disgraceful conduct, and shall be subjected to the pains and penalties attached to that Offence; and a Soldier convicted of disgraceful conduct, if sentenced to forfeit all Claim to Pension, will further be liable to be discharged with ignominy.

A Soldier who shall become maimed or mutilated by

Page from the Account Book of Private John Crichton, No.2511; he enlisted in the 71st Regiment in Glasgow in 1849, later transferring to the 93rd, with which regiment he served in the Crimea. The list of offences is comprehensive. (Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland, as are all other illustrations not otherwise credited.)

Officer and men of the 93rd at Granby Barracks, Devonport, in 1853. Ensign Macdonald, seated left, wears civilian clothes apart from his regimental forage cap, which has a dark blue crown, a small rounded peak, and the regimental diced band. Under a glass it appears, indistinctly, to bear the regimental bonnet badge on the front of the band. Two of the men wear trousers, the others kilts. Five of them wear the white drill jacket which was peculiar to Highland and Foot Guard regiments as undress wear; it has a cutaway standing collar, which could clearly be worn either closed or open and turned down; ten front buttons; and two white shoulder straps. The lance-corporal and corporal (left and right background) wear chevrons on both sleeves: the colours are hard to make out. They appear to be light braid on darker backing; photographs of this period often show yellow as much darker than its actual shade, and the 93rd wore white chevrons on yellow backing on their scarlet coatees; but one would expect to see plain red chevrons on the white jacket.

Most of the men wear the Glengarry, with regimentally diced band and (see right foreground) hanging tapes. The badge is hard to make out, but could well be that worn on the feather-mounted bonnet — see colour photographs. A Horse Guards circular memorandum of 12 July 1851 to Officers Commanding Highland Regiments had prescribed that 'NCOs and Men of Regiments wearing the kilt will henceforth use the Glengarry bonnet as a forage cap with the regimental band or border the same as on the feathered bonnet.' The 79th and 93rd wore the Glengarry in the Crimea; the 42nd, for some reason, retained the Kilmarnock. (Sir Hector Munro, MP*)*

musketry was extremely poor and the allocation of practice ammunition pathetically small. With the increased range and accuracy offered by the new technology of the Minié and the later Pattern 1853 Enfield rifle-musket, it was decided that the basic instruction given to troops had to be improved. This resulted in the foundation of the Army School of Musketry at Hythe, and a gradual improvement in regimental training.

The recruit passed through various drill squads, each graded according to their competence, until he was gauged 'perfect in all points of his duty'. He was then ready to join his battalion as a 'dutyman'. Instructors were told in the introduction to the contemporary drill manual that 'they must allow for the weak capacity of the recruit; and be patient, not rigorous, where endeavour and good will are apparent'[8].

For his daily exertions on the drill field the soldier would receive 1s. 1d. The daily rate of pay had remained constant for the past 50 years, and compared favourably with that of an agricultural labourer in the Highlands, the likely background of a soldier of the 93rd. From his daily rate money was deducted as 'stoppages' to pay for his rations of food and fuel (approx. 4½d. at home and 3½d. abroad)[9]. He was also obliged to maintain his 'necessaries' at his own expense.

Food and drink

His food when in peacetime barracks was a daily ration of 1lb. of meat and 1lb. of bread (¾lb. if at home); a daily ration of beer had been abolished, and an extra penny added to the men's pay. The meat was often of poor quality and when it was cooked (usually boiled) its weight would decrease. Breakfast and a midday dinner were the main meals, with an evening meal of bread and tea or coffee supplied if possible. With no fresh fruit or vegetables the official ration was nutritionally very poor, so regiments set up funds whereby fresh produce could be bought in bulk. These funds were, however, paid for by the soldiers themselves.

In overseas stations the official daily ration was supplied from a central commissariat and usually consisted of salted meat. Regiments again had to supplement it with what local fresh produce was available. The daily ration of the army while at Varna in Bulgaria prior to embarking for the Crimea consisted of 1lb. of salt meat (or fresh if available), 1½lb. of bread or 1lb. of biscuit. Sugar, coffee, and rice or barley (on medical grounds, to help prevent bowel disorders) was also supplied. For this 4½d. was stopped from each man's daily pay. Because the army had no field bakeries, unlike their French allies, and because fresh meat was seldom available, salt meat and biscuits became the norm once they arrived in the Crimea.

If the men could get their hands on oatmeal they would add this and water to their ration and boil up a kind of porridge, universally known as 'stir-about'. Private Donald Cameron of the 93rd describes, in his memoir of the campaign, making rough oatcakes on stones in a campfire which kept him and his companions sustained for some days afterwards. Despite the lack of fresh produce and the consequent nutritional deficiencies, the soldiers' basic diet often compared favourably with that of the civilian Highland population of the period, for whom oatmeal, potatoes and occasional fish were the staple foods, and starvation levels not uncommon.

The other thing a soldier could, and did, spend his money on with depressing monotony was, of course, drink. What would now be regarded as chronic alcohol abuse was endemic in the 19th century army; Wellington convincingly declared it to be the 'parent of every other military offence'. With little to occupy their time and energies, and given their position in the social hierarchy, it is not surprising that feelings of hopelessness and frustration led to men finding solace in the bottle. The detrimental effect on the men's health, discipline and efficiency was grave. In the eyes of the army reformers it was

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Captions to colour photographs

(1)
'Be sure the hand most daring there has wiped away a tear' — a romantic view of the embarkation of a Highland regiment for the Crimea, with consequent traumatic family separations, reflecting the popular enthusiasm for the war at the time. This image is from the lid of a ceramic pomatum jar; such lids were popular among Victorian collectors, and often carried similar types of illustration.

(2)
'A Lance Corporal of the 93rd Highlanders in Full Marching Order', painted in Portsmouth in 1852 by a local artist, R.Poate. The 93rd were stationed in Portsmouth from August 1852 until the Great Camp at Chobham in summer 1853. Like Fusiliers, Grenadiers and Light Infantry, NCOs of Highland units wore chevrons on both sleeves. Invisible here is the small brown leather percussion cap pouch normally worn attached to the right front of the waist (bayonet) belt; though there is evidence that at least some men of the 93rd carried it let into a small slit pocket on the right torso, set behind one of the lace loops, with the flap protruding. Note particularly the carefully rendered detail of the hose garters, and cf the 1850 Guard Order group in an accompanying photograph. Each regiment favoured its own method of knotting, often elaborate, stitched arrangements rather than true bows or knots. The 93rd seem to have devised this 'accordion' effect with a series of sewn loops, and very long hanging ribbons.

(3)
Private, 93rd Highlanders, c.1854: the major parts of this assembled uniform, displayed on a dummy at the Scottish United Services Museum, Edinburgh, are original. The coatee is believed to have been one used as reference by the artist Robert Gibb for his famous painting 'The Thin Red Line' in 1881; and the kilt came from the collection of the artist Skeoch Cumming. The weapon is the 1851 Minié rifle.

The short-tailed Highland coatee of 1836 pattern would shortly be replaced by the skirted doublet (coinciding with the introduction of the tunic in other regiments), but few would reach the Crimea before the end of the war. The thickly-tufted shoulder wings were worn in all companies of Highland regiments, rather than by flank companies only as in the rest of the Line. The 1836 regulations suppressed the old regimentally patterned lace for all except bandsmen, introducing plain white worsted for all regiments; the loops were pointed in the 93rd.

The sporran and kilt are of regimental pattern. The kilt, of the coarse woollen cloth known as 'hard tartan', is in Government or Military sett, similar to that worn by the 42nd, Black Watch.

The single crossbelt over the left shoulder supports the cartridge pouch, accommodating 60 rounds of ball ammunition and approximately 100 percussion caps. As mentioned under (2), the small ready-use pouch, shaped like a purse with a single- stud flap, was either mounted on the waist belt (or on the crossbelt, in certain units) or let into a small front pocket in the coatee; it is absent here. From 1850 the second crossbelt had been replaced by a waist belt supporting the bayonet in a frog on the left hip; this belt is a modern reproduction.

This man wears a coarse linen haversack, for rations, on his left hip. It was normally worn on the right, often held down by the waist belt, and a blue-painted wooden water bottle on the left.

The stiff white canvas spatterdash gaiters, rising to a point at the rear of the calf, are original. They are worn here over more modern knitted hose of the regimental pattern, with red garters; the Highland regiments of the 1850s still wore woven hose cut to the shape of the leg.

(4)
By the 1850s Highland regiments wore white hackles in all companies (the exception being the 42nd, who wore all red hackles); Grenadier Company men were distinguished by bonnets 2in. taller than those of the Battalion Companies. The red and white dicing worn by the 93rd since the raising of the regiment in 1799 was peculiar to them; all other Highland regiments incorporated a third colour, either blue or green, into the pattern. The brass badge bears the battle honour 'Cape of Good Hope' in reference to the campaign of 1806; in 1856 the honour 'Balaklava' was added to the regimental badge.

(5)
Detail of the 1836 pattern cuff, showing the regiment's yellow facings; the cuff patch of coat colour, bearing four loops of white lace in regimental shape; and the regimental button, in pewter for Other Ranks.

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perhaps the army's public image that suffered most. Within the army itself attitudes to drink varied; some officers took the pragmatic view that it was an unavoidable fact of military life that soldiers would drink. An extract from the Regimental Standing Orders of the 90th Light Infantry of 1848 illustrates this view: NCOs were instructed that when arresting a drunken soldier, '*he will have him confined at once, taking care not to touch him himself, always remembering that it is idle to reason with a drunken man, and cruel to irritate him.*'

Many regiments encouraged the growth of Temperance movements, as long as they did not develop into secret societies within the regiment. Reading rooms, lending libraries and savings banks were founded to provide the soldier with alternative ways of spending his time and money. Regimental schools (the 93rd had a very active one) and the introduction of pay awards and medals with gratuities for consistent good conduct, also helped improve the environment, and with that, the behaviour of the private soldier. The scourge of heavy drinking never really disappeared from the army, however.

Discipline

If drunkenness was seen by some as epitomising the brutality and ignorance of the 'common soldier', then flogging, in the eyes of the more radical social reformers, showed authority to be equally degraded. The widely-shared idea of sentences of hundreds of lashes being handed down for minor offences cast the army in a very poor light. The actual situation by the mid-19th century was somewhat different. Although flogging was still relied upon as a deterrent to crime, its use was in fact comparatively rare, especially in the Highland regiments[10]. To the Highland soldier publicly-inflicted corporal punishment was an appalling affront to his personal dignity, and consequently its threatened use was a great deterrent to crime. The precious regimental spirit and the paternal attitudes of officers towards their men could not survive frequent use of the lash. If a commanding officer was forced to maintain discipline in such a way, this could only reflect badly on his own competence and the efficiency of his command. Soldiers were still flogged, however, and many within the army stressed the practical advantages of its continued use. Flogging was quick, cheap, and did not keep a soldier absent from his duty as periods of confinement did, thereby putting a greater workload on his comrades. It also acted as a deterrent that the guilty man was punished with much ceremony in front of the whole regiment. Flogging was finally abolished in the peacetime British Army in 1869[11].

The *Regimental Standing Orders* of the 93rd encouraged officers and NCOs to take an enlightened view of discipline and punishment. They urged officers to get to know the characters of their men, and thereby enable them to know when to encourage or when to chastise them. They also warned officers not to believe everything that their NCOs told them about their men. Discipline was to be firm but not overbearing or petty: '*Indeed, it has long been the Lieutenant Colonel's decided opinion that in the management of soldiers, of the comparatively well educated soldiers of Scotland especially, the enlightened exercise of the law of kindness will generally prove more efficacious for the morality and discipline, than the adoption of a system of unrelaxed coercion'.*

Women

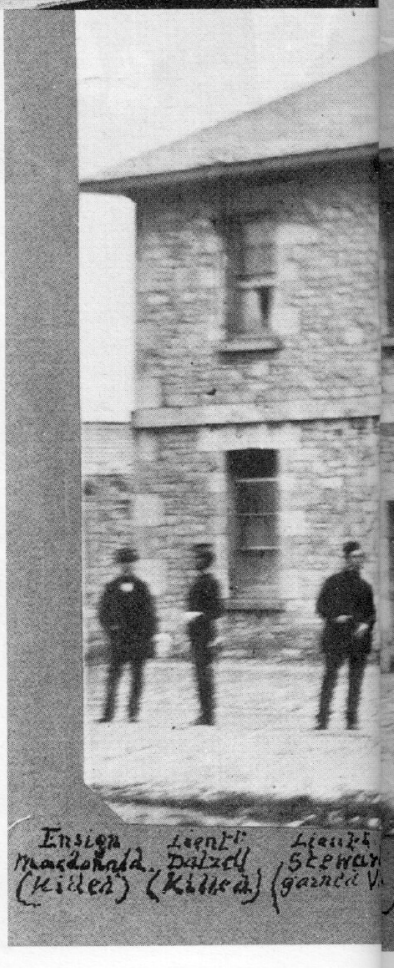
As soldiers enlisted for the greater part of their active adult life there was a strong desire to marry and start families. The more enlightened officers and reformers held the view that family life had a beneficial effect on the conduct of the men: family responsibilities made a man less likely (it was thought) to drink heavily, waste his pay or desert. In order to receive any benefits from the army in the way of food, fuel and accommodation for his wife, a soldier required the permission of his commanding officer before marrying. If a soldier married without permission then his wife had to fend for herself while her husband continued to live within the barracks. When a regiment moved station she had to follow as best she could. If sent overseas there was a good chance they would never see each other again.

If permission was granted then the soldier's wife would be 'taken onto the strength'. A soldier's record of conduct, his rank, and the total of existing married men within his company and regiment were all taken into account before permission was granted. A wife who was 'on the strength' would then be looked after by the regiment and integrated into its community. By the mid-19th century most regiments maintained a separate part of the barracks where all the married men and their families would live. If this was not possible then the old arrangement of families living in the common barrack room had to be revived, their only privacy being provided by a blanket screen.

When a regiment was ordered abroad a restriction was placed on the number of wives per company who could sail with them; this varied between six and 12 per company (of around 100 men) depending upon the foreign station. The selection was made by means of a ballot. Those that were left behind were forced back onto the charity of their family or parish. To try and get round this enforced separation, officers would often employ soldier's wives as servants in order to keep them with the regiment. Those women who were allowed to accompany their husbands had to contend with the same rigours of foreign service, occasionally even active service, and their life was still very hard.

This, then, is something of the background and experience of the soldiers of the 93rd Highlanders; men like

Detail of waist belt locket of 93rd — see also colour photographs



George Greig, Robert Sinclair and Donald Cameron, who all stood in the ranks of the 93rd on that October morning in 1854. Each of these men has left some account of the events of that day, accounts which are now in the archives of the Regimental Museum of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in Stirling Castle. MI

To be continued: *Part 2 will describe in detail the 93rd's part in the action of 25 October 1854.*

Footnotes:

[1]*Records of Service and Campaigning in Many Lands, Vol. II,* Surgeon General Munro, MD CB, London 1887, p. 29.

[2]Surgeon Munro's cased set of surgical instruments, along with his revolver, are on display on the Regimental Museum of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in Stirling Castle.

[3]Reminiscences of Private William Nairn, 93rd (Highland) Regiment, 1848-69. Now in the Regimental Archives of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, Stirling Castle.

[4]Scottish recruits had a high reputation for their general good conduct and better standard of education, largely due to the Scottish parish school system. Consequently there was often competition between regiments for Scots recruits, who sometimes chose to serve in non-Scottish regiments where their inherent advantages increased their chances of promotion.

[5]*Standing Orders and Regulations for the Ninety Third Highlanders,* first issued in 1835 and still in use in 1861.

[6]Recruits to Highland regiments were paid a higher bounty in order to pay for the items of their uniform peculiar to their Highland status. These then became part of the soldier's 'necessaries', although an annual allowance was supposed to be paid towards the expense of maintaining them. In the 1850s the initial figure added to the bounty was £1 5s., with an annual allowance of 8s. 6d. Whether this money was adequate is debatable, as there is evidence that the extra expense of the Highland uniform deterred some native Scots from enlisting in Highland regiments. (These figures are from a contemporary account book of a soldier of the 93rd).

[7]In the summer of 1853 a large Camp of Exercise was held at Chobham in Surrey, ostensibly to rehearse the formation of a large field army in the event of a foreign invasion. This was the first occasion in peacetime for many years that several regiments of both infantry and cavalry, plus artillery, were brought together and exercised as a larger formation. The camp also acted as a test ground for many proposed improvements to equipment and clothing. It gave to many officers and men their only experience of performing large scale drill movements prior to the Crimean War. The relative success of the camp led to the setting up of a large permanent training area at Aldershot. The 93rd (Highland) Regiment were one of the regiments present at Chobham.

[8]*Field Exercises and Evolutions of the Army, as revised in 1833* from the Introduction to Recruits.

[9]*Wellington's Legacy, The Reform of the British Army 1830-54,* Hew Strachan, Manchester 1984, p.58.

[10]Over the period of the Chobham Camp of Exercise, from June to August 1853, only four men were flogged out of 17,658 troops present: Strachan, *op. cit.*, p.167.

[11]Soldiers could still undergo flogging on active service until 1881, although the number of lashes permitted was reduced to 50 in 1869 and to 25 in 1879.

Another study from the Ewart album, showing one of the barrack blocks at Devonport. The men all appear to be wearing dark trousers, presumably the very dark grey 'Oxford mixture' with a red side welt. Most of them wear their white spatterdash gaiters under the trousers. Shirtsleeves, white drill jackets, and variously coloured waistcoats can just be made out, and the Glengarry is the only identifiable headgear, worn with a large badge at front left. The officers (left foreground) are very blurred; their fate in the Crimea is noted below the picture. The second man from the left leaning against the wall is the diminutive Drummer Laing; despite his apparent youth, note that the only woman in the group, right of the central doorway, is named as Mrs. Laing, and also appears to be very young.

David Lownds

Text and paintings by KEVIN LYLES

During February and March 1968 the United States Marine Corps was engaged in one of the more notable episodes of the Vietnam War: the siege of Khe Sanh. The defence of the combat base received massive press coverage and, at the height of the siege, the base and its Marine defenders were the focus of world-wide attention. The Marines' commander, and the senior man on the ground throughout the battle, was Col. David. E. Lownds.

WORLD WAR II AND KOREA

Lownds was born in 1920 in Holyoke, Massachusetts, the family having originally emigrated to the USA shortly before the turn of the century from Staffordshire. He began his military career in October 1942, receiving a second lieutenant's commission in the Marine Corps Reserve. He was promoted to first lieutenant in July 1943 and transferred to the 4th Marine Division. Thereafter Lownds served with distinction in the Pacific as a platoon leader with Co. B, 1st Bn., 24th Marines, 4th Marine Division. He took part in the fierce fighting at Roi-Namur in the Marshall Islands in February 1944; at Saipan in the Marianas in June 1944; and finally in the bloodbath of Iwo Jima, February to March 1945.

Among the medal ribbons that Lownds brought back from the Pacific were two Purple Hearts: one earned on Saipan, where the blast from a close round left several fragments in his forehead; the other for a gunshot wound in the left hip, picked up on Iwo Jima.

Returning to the USA in 1945 he was assigned to the Signal Bn., Special Training Regt. at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, where he served as Executive Officer until his tour of active duty ended in December of that year. While at Lejeune he was promoted to captain.

Lownds returned to extended active duty in August 1950 and was assigned to the 2nd Marines, 2nd Marine Division as Assistant Operations Officer. Promoted to major in January 1951, he was integrated into the regular Marine Corps the same year.

During the Korean War Lownds served in several capacities: Intelligence Officer, 9th Marines; Executive Officer, 3rd Bn. of the 9th; Operations Officer of the First Shore Party Battalion, 1st Marine Division. This last, a provisional unit based on the Kimpo Peninsula, was responsible for patrolling the Han River and outlying islands.

After Korea Lownds settled into the routine of the peace-time Marine Corps and was assigned a variety of jobs, ranging from Staff Officer at the Special Weapons Project at HQ Marine Corps to Logistics Officer at Basic School, Quantico. In 1958 he was promoted lieutenant-colonel and saw a year's tour of duty as CO of the 3rd Bn., 8th Marines, 2nd Marine Division, going on to become Plans Officer for the division.

By 1965 Lownds was Operations Officer of the Marine Expeditionary Brigade during the Corps' involvement in the Santo Domingo crisis. The Marines were tasked with evacuating US nationals from the Dominican Republic, the Caribbean island nation which was in the throes of an alleged Communist-inspired coup. For his part in the operation Lownds was awarded the Bronze Star with combat 'V' and in July he was promoted to full colonel.

Lt. Lownds after being presented with his first Purple Heart on Saipan, summer 1944. (All photographs courtesy David E. Lownds)

KHE SANH

The combat base at Khe Sanh had been established for almost a year before Col. Lownds assumed command of the 26th Marines in August 1967. Situated in the northwest corner of South Vietnam, the base occupied a plateau one mile long and half a mile wide. Surrounded by the numerous hills of the Annamite Mountains, Khe Sanh and its airstrip was a tight, solitary world for the Marines who were based there. Three of the surrounding hills — 861, 881 North and 881 South — had seen bitter fighting in the so-called 'Spring Hill Fights' of early 1967. When Lownds arrived these hills were fortified and held by Marines, and would play a crucial role in the defence of Khe Sanh.

Tactically the importance of the combat base lay in its position. Bordered to the west by Laos and to the north by the De-Militarized Zone, the base sat astride a major North Vietnamese infiltration route to the South. Gen. Westmoreland obser-

ved of the base: 'Were we to relinquish the Khe Sanh area the North Vietnamese would have an unobstructed route to the two northernmost provinces, from which they might outflank our positions south of the DMZ — positions which were blocking NVA attacks from the North.'

The terrain around the Khe Sanh plateau is one of rugged hills and covered by either triple-canopy jungle or dense bamboo and elephant grass. To effectively control the area would take possibly thousands of troops, so Khe Sanh was a permanent base from which Marines could run patrols.

There was little doubt that the Marines could inflict a telling blow on the North Vietnamese if the latter could be met in a head-on confrontation — something they had so far avoided. It was hoped that the presence of the combat base would entice the enemy into just such a situation, with the Marines dug into the red soil of the plateau acting as bait.

As fighting and enemy activity increased around Khe Sanh so did the size of the Marine force at the base. In January 1968 the 26th Marine Regt. was brought up to strength with the arrival of the 3rd Battalion. By the end of January Lownds had a combined strength of six battalions: four Marine infantry, one Marine artillery and one ARVN Ranger battalion. This force included 105mm howitzers, five M48 tanks, two Ontos (self-propelled sextuple 106mm recoilless rifles), and detachments of USAF and US Navy personnel.

Although the NVA continuously probed the Marines' perimeter, making several assaults on the base, the major hazard to the Marines inside the wire was from incoming rocket, mortar and artillery fire. During February the North Vietnamese fired 4,404 rounds into the mile-long base and its adjacent hill outposts, with more than 1,300 rounds hitting Khe Sanh on the day of the 3rd.

Living below ground in bunkers and trenches became a way of life for the Marine defenders. Before the siege began in earnest the base was a sprawl of tents, huts and even a mess hall, but as the siege progressed the Marines began to dig in in earnest. Bunkers were strengthened with whatever material came to hand, the plateau becoming honeycombed with trenches to keep movement above the ground to a minimum. This did not appeal to the Marines' offensive spirit; but the Khe Sanh garrison continued to fill sandbags, string out wire, and wait for the NVA to launch the big attack.

The full-scale assault by the tens of thousands of North Vietnamese regulars known to be surrounding the base never came, but nor did the shelling ever let up. By early March the siege had evolved into a continuous artillery duel between the Marine gunners and their NVA counterparts in the surrounding hills. The NVA's artillery ranged from 60mm and 82mm mortars sited within 2,000m to 3,000m of the base, to 130mm and 152mm guns fired from camouflaged caves 10-15km away in Laos. These shells were extremely destructive as there was very little they could not penetrate — even duds went about four feet into the ground.

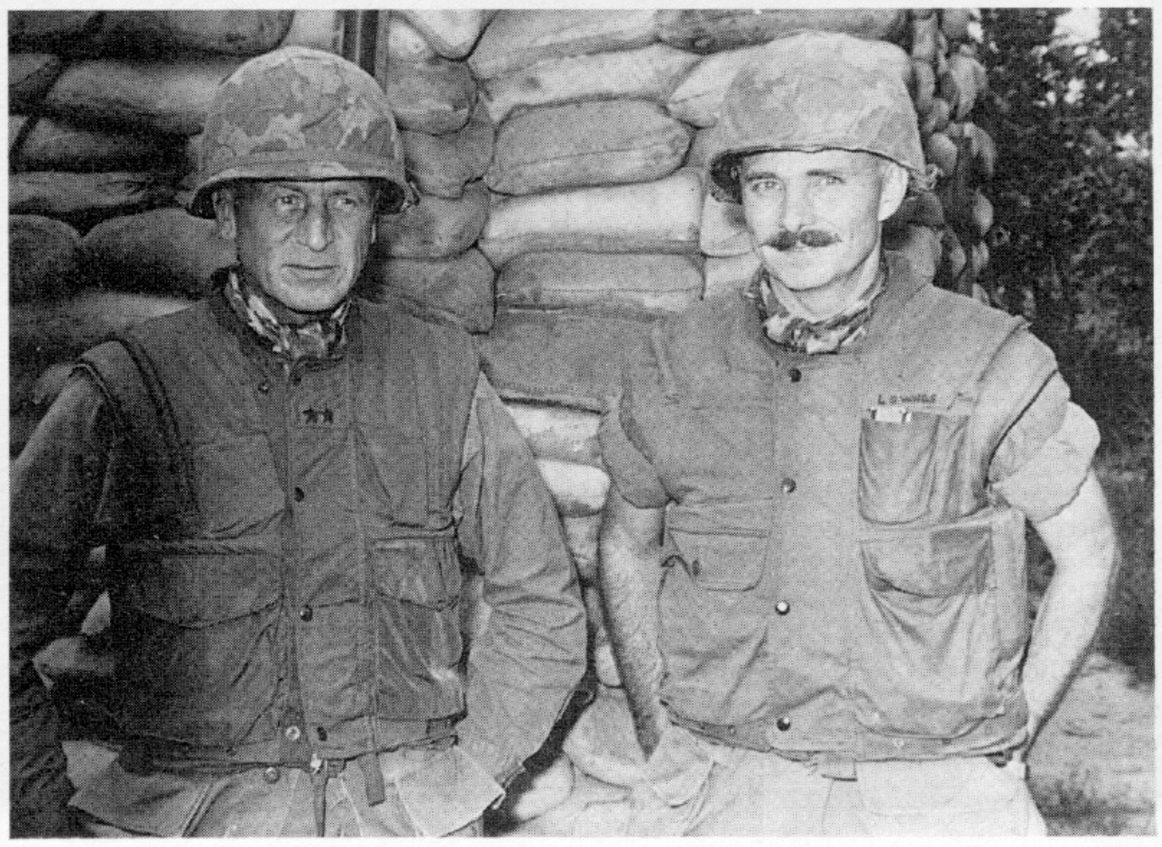
As well as Khe Sanh's own firepower Lownds had at his disposal an awesome array of aerial support from Marine, USAF and Navy aircraft. During February Marine and Navy pilots flew 7,907 fixed-wing attack sorties in support of the base. As part of Operation 'Niagara' USAF B-52s flew over 1,099 'arc-light' missions, bombing at a rate of 1,000 tons a day during the same month. Marine forward observers would direct these airstrikes onto enemy positions sometimes only hundreds of metres outside the perimeter.

Thus it was that the Marines on the plateau spent the months of February and March, under constant threat from the surrounding hills — an average weekly 'incoming' of 2,500 rounds. This was on top of nights spent straining eyes, ears and nerves for signs of the expected attack. Conditions in the bunkers rapidly deteriorated, rats were rife, and everything from drinking water to ammunition was in short supply. The garrison was resupplied entirely by air, with several aircraft lost to ground fire.

It is important to note that the term 'siege' was never used at Khe Sanh by anyone from Col. Lownds down. The Marines, although besieged, were never cut off and could resupply, reinforce or withdraw at will. It was this factor that made redundant any comparison with Dien Bien Phu — a comparison constantly drawn by the more excitable elements of the press [1]. More than 103,000 tons of bombs were dropped on the NVA, who are estimated to have lost nearly 2,000 men.

Operation 'Scotland', as the defence of Khe Sanh was known, ended on 31 March when the North Vietnamese were seen to have withdrawn from the area. During the first weeks President Johnson had declared that Khe Sanh must not fall. It did not fall: but the defence of the base cost the Marines 199 men killed and 830 wounded from 19 January to 31 March 1968.

In mid-March Col. Lownds was asked by a *Time* magazine reporter if the enemy encirclement had ever given him cause for alarm. 'Hell no,' he replied, 'I've got Marines. My job is to stay here, my job is to hold.' MI



Col. Lownds outside his command bunker at Khe Sanh with Maj. Gen. R.M. Tompkins, commanding general of 3rd Marine Division and a frequent visitor to Khe Sanh.

The colour reconstructions opposite show David E. Lownds as (top) 1st Lieutenant, Co.B, 1/24th Marines, Saipan, 1944. *Lownds wears standard Marine Corps herringbone utility uniform, with the Corps' stencil on the left breast and rank bars on the collar. The lower pockets have been removed to reduce the shirt's bulk when tucked into trousers. His M1 helmet is worn with the 'duck-hunter' camouflage cover unique to the Marine Corps. Weapons are an M1 carbine, and an M1911 Colt automatic worn on the pistol belt in an M916 leather holster. The khaki trouser belt, 'rough-out' boots and gaiters are all standard Marine Corps issue.*

(Below) Colonel, 26th Marines, Khe Sanh, February-March 1968.
Throughout the siege Lownds wore much the same uniform as any Marine inside the wire. The helmet with leaf-pattern cover is standard, as are the last pattern tropical utility uniform and tropical boots. His 'flak jacket' is a slightly unusual variation of the standard M1955 Marine Corps body armour; it has additional lower cargo pockets and has the rope 'rifle ridge' on both shoulders. The ascot worn around the neck is a piece of camouflage parachute silk given to Lownds by Maj.Gen. Tompkins. Lownds wore no rank insignia while at Khe Sanh since he was at the base throughout, and the figure with the waxed moustache and cigar was instantly recognisable as 'the old man'.

Note:
(1) For an account of the siege of Dien Bien Phu, 1954, see 'MI' No.18, pp. 8-16.

David Lownds

1st Lieutenant,
Saipan, 1944

Colonel
Khe Sanh, 1968